

SUPPLEMENTS TO
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE



Irenaeus on the Trinity



JACKSON LASHIER

BRILL

Irenaeus on the Trinity

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

TEXTS AND STUDIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND LANGUAGE

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VOLUME 127

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/vcs*

Irenaeus on the Trinity

By

Jackson Lashier



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LEIDEN | BOSTON

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lashier, Jackson.

Irenaeus on the Trinity / by Jackson Lashier.

pages cm. — (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, ISSN 0920-623X ; Volume 127)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-27814-1 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-28127-1 (e-book)

1. Trinity—History of doctrines—Early church, ca. 30–600. 2. Irenaeus, Saint, Bishop of Lyon. I. Title.

BT109.L35 2014

231'.044092—dc23

2014027828

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual 'Brill' typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0920-623X

ISBN 978-90-04-27814-1 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-28127-1 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
List of Abbreviations	ix

Introduction	1
Orientation	1
Methodology	12
Plan	15

1 The Dissimilar Contexts of Irenaeus and the Apologists 18

Irenaeus	18
<i>Life</i>	18
<i>Influences</i>	20
<i>Justin</i>	22
<i>Theophilus</i>	26
<i>His Opponents</i>	29
<i>Philosophy</i>	39
<i>Irenaeus' Occasion for Writing</i>	41
Apologists	44
<i>Lives</i>	44
<i>The Apologists' Occasion for Writing</i>	50
Conclusion	52

2 God the Father 54

The Apologists	55
<i>The Identity of God</i>	55
<i>The Nature of God</i>	63
Irenaeus	70
<i>The Identity of God</i>	70
<i>The Nature of God</i>	78
Conclusion	90

3 The Logos of God 92

The Apologists	93
<i>Logos Theology</i>	93
<i>The Generation of the Logos</i>	107

Irenaeus	117	
<i>Logos Theology</i>	117	
<i>The Generation of the Logos</i>		130
Conclusion	147	
4 The Sophia of God	149	
The Apologists	150	
<i>Justin</i>	150	
<i>Athenagoras</i>	153	
<i>Theophilus</i>	158	
Irenaeus	164	
<i>The Holy Spirit as the Sophia of God</i>		168
<i>The Holy Spirit Creates</i>	176	
<i>The Holy Spirit Reveals</i>	183	
Conclusion	187	
5 God, Logos, Sophia	189	
The Apologists	190	
<i>Justin</i>	190	
<i>Athenagoras</i>	197	
<i>Theophilus</i>	200	
Irenaeus	205	
<i>The Triune God in Himself</i>	206	
<i>The Triune God in Relation to the Economy</i>		212
<i>The Trinity in Creation</i>	212	
<i>The Trinity in Redemption</i>	216	
Conclusion	220	
Conclusion	222	
Bibliography	229	
Index of Ancient Authors	240	
Index of Names and Subjects	248	
Index of Modern Authors	254	

Acknowledgements

The early form of this book was a dissertation completed at Marquette University between the years 2009–2011. During that time, I received invaluable support and guidance from the faculty, staff, and my fellow students. Particularly, I want to thank the members of my dissertation board, Dr. Michel René Barnes, Rev. Alexander Golitzin, Rev. D. Thomas Hughson, S.J., and Dr. D. Stephen Long, for reading through the work and offering helpful feedback that undoubtedly strengthened the argument in its final form. I also received two fellowships during those years that enabled me to complete significant portions of the research and writing. Thanks to the Department of Theology and the President's Council of Marquette University for awarding me with a John P. Raynor, S.J. fellowship and to A Foundation for Theological Education for selecting me to be a John Wesley Fellow. I consider both of these fellowships high honors.

A special word of thanks is due to my director Dr. Michel René Barnes. I am indebted to his scholarship and pedagogy, as well as to his friendship. Much of the content of the following pages had its spark in his ideas that I either read or discussed with him. I am also grateful to the Editors-in-Chief, and all of the people, at *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* who have made this publication process smooth and painless, as well as to Dr. E.P. Meijering for his careful reading and learned comments on the manuscript.

Thanks also to my parents, Jack and Kathy Lashier, who have always believed in me, always supported me, and always loved me. They nurtured in me a love of reading and writing at a young age, which bore unexpected fruit in theological studies and, in particular, this current project. I am thankful also for my in-laws, Stan and Marsha Graff. In addition to the love and support of both sets of parents, which we have come to expect, we have benefited also from their gracious monetary support, which we never expected, and which helped to make the project a reality.

Mostly, I want to thank my wife Julie who has walked with me through every step of this process. She is one of the primary reasons I pursued doctoral studies in the first place, and I cannot begin to express how much her love and unwavering belief in me has meant. She has sacrificed much in the way of her own plans and her own time so that I might complete this work. I am so blessed to have a partner in life who shares with me a love of theology and an Irenaean appreciation for the beauty of God's creation.

The long arc of this project encompassed several significant events in our life. Our daughter Ruthie was born at the dissertation's inception, and

I completed much of the research and writing while staying home with her in the days. Our daughter Rachel was born shortly after I defended the dissertation, and the revisions began during stolen (and few) moments of quiet while both girls slept. Our son David was born shortly after I was notified of the revised version's acceptance for publication with Brill, culminating this journey. These three blessings have taught me more about the mysteries of God, and particularly the incredible depth of God's love, than I could read in a lifetime. My children are my greatest accomplishment, and this book is dedicated to them.

List of Abbreviations

¹ <i>Apol.</i>	Justin, <i>First Apology</i>
² <i>Apol.</i>	Justin, <i>Second Apology</i>
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>Aug</i>	<i>Augustinianum</i>
<i>AugStud</i>	<i>Augustinian Studies</i>
<i>Autol.</i>	Theophilus, <i>To Autolycus</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
<i>Didask.</i>	Alcinous, <i>Didaskalikos</i>
<i>Epid.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
<i>Greg</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ITS</i>	<i>Indian Theological Studies</i>
<i>J ECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JrnRel</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	Athenagoras, <i>Legatio</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NPNF	The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NV</i>	<i>Nova et Vetera</i>
<i>NVT</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i>
<i>RSPH TH</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
<i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen

<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>ZNTW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche</i>

Introduction

Orientation

Irenaeus of Lyons is a seminal figure in the development of Christian thought. In terms of both scope and volume, he is without rival among writers of the first two centuries. Previous writers had addressed issues of belief and practice piecemeal offering little by way of a comprehensive theological system. The defenders of the Christian faith appearing in the middle second century, known to history as ‘apologists,’ were more substantive in their writings yet remained narrow in their scope. After all, one need not produce a comprehensive system to show Christianity’s reasonableness. By contrast, the purpose driving Irenaeus’ thought and writings, a refutation of the various ‘Gnostic’ theologies, was much larger and addressed a problem more insidious than even the threat of unjust persecution or doctrinal differences splitting a given church.¹ It required a substantial reply which, while not systematic in method, certainly touched on a large number of topics pertinent to Christian belief and practice and, arguably, in many cases defined which topics ought to be labeled as such.

As is often noted, Irenaeus refuted his ‘Gnostic’ opponents by constructing a means of reading those texts later known as the Old and New Testaments as one cohesive narrative, a narrative that found its unity in the saving purposes and actions of the *one* God manifested in an economy of salvation encompassing both creation and redemption. Such a reading rejected the many gods of the ‘Gnostic’ *Pleroma* as well as the dualist system upon which all ‘Gnostic’ theologies were built. Thus, the battle with ‘Gnosticism’ was decidedly exegetical, one that required not the listing of a verse here and the quoting of a verse there, for the ‘Gnostics’ employed such a method, but rather, one that required the identification and use of an overarching narrative consistent with the *regula fidei* and the faith once delivered, a narrative not imposed on the scriptures but drawn out and revealed as their inner but often obscured logic. To this end, we find what has become Irenaeus’ most famous line:

¹ The traditional title ‘Gnostic’ is a device used by polemicists and historians to identify what appears, in reality, to be a disparate grouping of numerous theological communities held together only by a loose association of common beliefs. I use the traditional title for ease of reference in the introduction; the quotation marks indicate its inadequacy. In chapter one, I will engage ‘Gnosticism’ in more depth and move toward a more historically accurate title.

[The ‘Gnostics’] try to adapt to their own sayings in a manner worthy of credence, either the Lord’s parables, or the prophets’ sayings, or the apostles’ words, so that their fabrication might not appear to be without witness. They disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures and, as much as in them lies, they disjoint the members of the Truth... By way of illustration, suppose someone would take the beautiful image of a king, carefully made out of precious stones by a skillful artist, and would destroy the features of the man on it and change around and rearrange the jewels, and make the form of a dog, or of a fox, out of them, and that a rather bad piece of work.²

To continue the apt metaphor, Irenaeus’ grand purpose lies in restoring the image of the King through his reading of scripture. With such a stated emphasis, scholars throughout Christian history rightly have occupied themselves with Irenaeus’ exegetical method and his interpretation of the scriptural narrative.³

Regrettably, this exegetical focus, already dominant among modern scholars, became exclusive in the middle to late twentieth century as a result of the long shadow cast by Friedrich Loofs’ influential study of Irenaeus.⁴ In this posthumous work, Loofs had concluded that Irenaeus was not the theological innovator once thought, but rather a mere redactor of prior sources. His argument was persuasive and left a number of scholars hesitant to form any solid conclusions on Irenaeus’ original thought. Those who did respond to Loofs found Irenaeus’ theological innovations and contributions exclusively in his

2 *Haer.* 1.8.1 in *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies, Book 1*, trans. and notes Dominic J. Unger, rev. John J. Dillon, ACW 55 (New York: Newman Press, 1992), 41. Subsequent references to this translation of *Haer.* 1 will be marked in the footnotes with ACW 55 followed by the page number. Where not noted, translations of Irenaeus are mine. Critical editions are as follows: Book One, *Contre les Hérésies 1.1 and 2*, trans., intro., and notes Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, SC 263 and 264 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1979), Book Two, *Contre les Hérésies 2.1 and 2*, trans., intro., and notes Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293 and 294 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982), Book Three, *Contre les Hérésies 3.1 and 2*, trans., intro., and notes Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 210 and 211 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974), Book Four, *Contre les Hérésies 4.1 and 2*, trans., intro., and notes Rousseau, et al., SC 100.1 and 100.2 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965), and Book Five, *Contre les Hérésies 5.1 and 2*, trans., intro., and notes Rousseau, Doutreleau, and Charles Mercier, SC 152 and 153 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969).

3 The most well-known Irenaeian doctrine, ‘recapitulation,’ falls under this category.

4 Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenäus*, TU 46.2 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1930).

use of scripture or his 'biblical theology.'⁵ While the hesitancy that affected a generation of Irenaean studies, thankfully, no longer dominates the scholarly landscape,⁶ the exclusive focus on Irenaeus' exegesis, biblical theology, and the like, nevertheless remains. Older studies that had focused on more speculative issues in the Bishop's thought, issues, that is, that cannot be derived directly from scripture, now seem quaint and out of place.

No aspect of Irenaeus' theology has suffered more from this scholarly shift in focus than his Trinitarian theology. With few exceptions, which I will note momentarily, twentieth century scholars have all but neglected what, in pre-twentieth century scholarship, was seen as a crucial part of Irenaeus' thought, namely, an understanding of the one God of the economy as Triune, both in his manifestation in the economy and in his essential existence apart from that manifestation.⁷ And while a growing number of scholars acknowledge that Irenaeus' descriptions of God's manifestation in the economy may properly be considered Triune, they continue to deny that he has any concern or knowledge for the Triune nature of God apart from his economic manifestation. Thus, despite the focus on Trinitarian themes, these scholars have also contributed to the loss of Irenaeus' full Trinitarian theology.

Two factors in addition to those already noted have contributed to the particular neglect of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. The first is the onset of higher criticism in biblical studies, the effect of which, in this context, has been to show how Trinitarian developments of later centuries were not 'intended' by the biblical authors—intention now being the final arbiter of meaning.⁸

5 Names of prominent works on Irenaeus during this time period emphasize this focus and already serve to establish their position on Irenaeus' positive contributions against Loofs' negative conclusions. Note, for example, John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948) and Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, trans. R. MacKenzie (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959).

6 That the most recent studies of Irenaeus' thought have not refuted Loofs' thesis in detail prior to addressing positive theses, demonstrates how far Irenaean studies have moved from Loofs' conclusions. See, for example, the various essays in Paul Foster and Sara Parvis, eds., *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

7 In modern theology, this distinction commonly is maintained by speaking of the 'economic Trinity' and the 'immanent Trinity.' While these terms, and even this distinction, is anachronistic when describing Patristic theology, it allows for a means of categorizing secondary scholarship on Irenaeus and for discerning the extent to which certain scholars allow for Trinitarian thought in his works.

8 This development is not unrelated to the negative influence of Loofs' thesis, for his source critical conclusions were influential in part because of the general enthusiasm for higher criticism in the early decades of the twentieth century.

By his proximity to the first century, Irenaeus largely has been included with the biblical writers as not having intended ‘Trinity’ in any sense recognizable to the fourth century meanings. The second flows from the first. As Trinitarian theology becomes severed from scripture, such thought is labeled, often pejoratively, as ‘speculative.’ Once this move is made, Irenaeus cannot be read as a Trinitarian theologian for he emphatically rejects speculative theology as the method of his ‘Gnostic’ opponents:

If, however, we cannot find a solution for all things in the Scriptures, nevertheless let us not look for another God besides the one who exists. That is the greatest impiety. Such matters we must leave to God who created us, since we know very well that the Scriptures are perfect, inasmuch as they were given by God’s Word and Spirit . . . If, therefore, even among things of the created world some are in God’s keeping, while we, too, have knowledge of others, why should it be irksome if while searching the Scriptures—since all the Scriptures are spiritual—we, with God’s grace, explain some of the things, though we leave others in God’s keeping . . .⁹

These passages come toward the end of the second book of *Against Heresies* (hereafter *Haer.*), a book devoted entirely to refuting the various ‘Gnostic’ theologies, the cornerstone of which was a complex understanding of the divine nature in its existence apart from the economy. If Irenaeus rejects such speculative thought on epistemological grounds, it is argued, searching his writings for Trinitarian theology (now assumed to be extra biblical) is a misguided and anachronistic exercise. Irenaeus simply did not ask these questions.¹⁰

9 *Haer.* 2.28.2–3 in *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies, Book 2*, trans. and notes Unger, rev. Dillon, ACW 65 (New York: Newman Press, 2012), 87–88. Subsequent references to this translation of *Haer.* 2 will be marked in the footnotes with ACW 65 followed by the page number.

10 In the remainder of this work, for ease of reference, I will refer to this majority opinion as the first trajectory of scholarship regarding Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology. Some prominent examples of this trajectory include Ysabel de Andia, *Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l’homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1986), T.A. Audet, “Orientations théologiques chez Saint Irénée,” *Traditio* 1 (1943): 15–54, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil, 1984, repr. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), André Benoît, *Saint Irénée: Introduction à l’étude de sa théologie*, Études d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), G.N. Bonwetsch, *Die Theologie des Irenäus*,

The genesis of the present work is the conviction that this majority opinion fails to do justice to Irenaeus' understanding of the nature of God and, therefore, the entirety of his work which, ultimately, is centered on the one God who both creates and saves as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My purpose, therefore, is to recover Irenaeus as a Trinitarian theologian through a study of the terms, images, and scriptural exegesis that constitute his Trinitarian understanding of the one God. His Trinitarian theology is, first of all, traditional, for it comes to him in the form of the *regula fidei*, a threefold affirmation of belief in God as Father, God as Son, and God as Spirit, which Irenaeus maintains provides the authoritative means of interpreting scripture. More importantly, however, Irenaeus develops this traditional Trinitarian theology in new and unprecedented directions through his polemic with 'Gnosticism,' concentrated in *Haer.* 2, which establishes a Trinitarian understanding of the divine nature contrary to the 'Gnostic' *Pleroma*. This Trinitarian understanding, in turn, provides the logic that supports Irenaeus' explanation of the work of God

Beiträge zur Förderung der christlichen Theologie 2.9 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. J.E. Steely (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), Jean Daniélou, *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 2, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. and ed. John Baker (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1973), Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan from the 3rd German Edition, 7 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), Albert Houssiau, *La Christologie de Saint Irénée*, Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis Dissertationes 3.1 (Louvain: Publications Universitaires; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1955), J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1978), Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 21 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1956), Johannes Kunze, *Die Gotteslehre des Irenäus* (Leipzig: Dörffling and Franke, 1891), Lawson, *Biblical Theology*, Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: T and T Clark, 2010), Juan Ochagavía, *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus' Teaching on Revelation and Tradition*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 171 (Rome: Pontificium institutum orientalium studiorum, 1964), Antonio Orbe, various works, notably, *Estudios Valentinianos*, vol. 1/1, *Hacia la primera teología de la procesión del Verbo*, Analecta Gregoriana 65, Analecta Gregoriana 99 (Rome: Libreria editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, 1958), Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 1964, repr. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008), Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature From the Apostles Creed to Irenaeus*, 1950, repr., Christian Classics (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2005), J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, vol. 1, *The Antenicene Theology*, trans. H.L.B. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1910), Yoshifumi Torisu, *Gott und Welt: Eine Untersuchung zur Gotteslehre des Irenäus von Lyon* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1991), and Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*.

in the economy, that is, the creative and salvific work that constitutes his unified reading of the scriptures firmly fleshed out in *Haer.* 3–5 and his only other extant work, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (hereafter *Epid.*). Thus, in order to understand fully the nature of Irenaeus' reading of scripture, one must grasp his Trinitarian understanding of God.

Nevertheless, in studying Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology, it will not do to simply return to an earlier generation of Irenaeian scholars who, as noted previously, concluded that Trinitarian theology constituted a significant aspect of Irenaeus' thought. Such studies were plagued by ideological commitments that required the existence of a clear line of doctrinal orthodoxy connecting the New Testament writers to the fourth century and beyond. As a result, these studies tend to ignore the historical setting of Irenaeus' work, often making more references to the so-called 'Arian' argument and use of scripture that occasioned the fourth century Trinitarian debates than the 'Gnostics.' Moreover, these studies are guided by a more systematic methodological approach, which often results in an imposition upon Irenaeus of theological concerns and categories that are not his own but instead belong to a later era (e.g., 'person'). The conclusion of these older studies is ultimately that Irenaeus is a Nicene figure who lived and wrote in the second century (although it is rarely stated in such bald terms).¹¹ While this minority scholarly position differs significantly in its conclusions from the majority position or first trajectory addressed above, the net result is the same: the true nature of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology is obscured.¹²

11 In the remainder of this work, for ease of reference, I will refer to this earlier and, thus, minority opinion as the second trajectory of scholarship regarding Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. Three twentieth century scholars, representative of earlier works, stand out here: F.R.M. Hitchcock, *Irenaeus of Lugdunum: A Study of his Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914) and also his "The Apostolic Preaching of Irenaeus and its Light on his Doctrine of the Trinity," *Hermathena* 14 (1907): 307–37, Jules Lebreton, *Histoire du Dogme de la Trinité: Des Origines au Concile de Nicée*, vol. 2, *De Saint Clément à Saint Irénée*, Bibliothèque de Théologie Historique (Paris: Beauchesne, 1928), and F. Vernet, "Irénée (Saint)," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* VII/2 (1923): 2394–535.

12 There have been many important works of the last century that, while not studies of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology *per se*, address subjects within Irenaeus' thought that are pertinent to my topic. Three works stand out here, namely, Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Iain M. Mackenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A theological commentary and translation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) and M.C. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 91 (Leiden: Brill, 2008). Briggman's study concludes

What is needed, then, and what this work aims to provide, is a study of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology on its own terms, a study, that is, which places Irenaeus' work in the ideological context in which he wrote. Such a study must avoid, on the one hand, an assumption against the presence of developed Trinitarian theology because of the early time period of that context and, on the other hand, a concern for any line of orthodoxy, real or imagined, extending from scripture to the fourth century. To accomplish this task, Irenaeus' interlocutors must not be the 'Arians,' Athanasius or the Cappadocians, but rather, his opponents and his immediate predecessors who were, in some cases, his sources. I speak, of course, of the 'Gnostics' and the apologists respectively.

Irenaeus' works were occasioned by the various schools of 'Gnosticism.' To take this claim seriously, one must investigate how both Irenaeus' manner of argumentation and his conclusions directly contradict 'Gnostic' conclusions. This is not to say that every single Irenaeian theologoumena must find its inspiration in 'Gnosticism'—Irenaeus, after all, consistently maintains that he is merely passing on the tradition that has been handed to him, the tradition that was formed apart from any interaction with 'Gnostic' theology. A charitable reading must take him at his word. But despite what Irenaeus says, his work is replete with theological innovations, areas in which he diverges, even if only slightly, from those writers he claims were faithful to the teachings of the apostles. In these cases, 'Gnosticism' ought to be assumed and investigated as the impetus for these innovations. To enable this method, the various 'Gnostic' theologies must be placed in running conversation with Irenaeus' theology. After an initial engagement with 'Gnosticism' as a whole system, I attempt to address its pertinent manifestations throughout this work.

Also crucial to my method of studying Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology on its own terms will be to put his thought in conversation with the thought of the apologists (what I will refer to as 'Apologetic theology'). Surprisingly, this method has not often been attempted. The reasons for this are unclear, but it may have something to do with a desire on the part of scholars to avoid

with an understanding of the Holy Spirit as an equal and fully divine member of the divine Trinity and, therefore, will be my primary dialogue partner in chapter four. Although MacKenzie and Steenberg both focus almost exclusively on the economic Trinity, they nowhere deny, as do the works of the first trajectory, that Irenaeus has no conception of an eternal Trinity apart from the economy. Indeed, drawing on the work of Jacques Fantino (see below), Steenberg in particular hints that he believes the logic of Irenaeus' position demands an eternal, which is to say, immanent Trinity, although he suggests that Irenaeus is inconsistent in this position. I will, therefore, interact with Steenberg in various places throughout the work.

anything that resembles Loofs' source critical study, the methodological approach of which put Irenaeus in conversation with Theophilus of Antioch in order to show the derivative nature of the former's work. On the contrary, I work from the position that Irenaeus' innovative Trinitarian theology emerges precisely when read against the Trinitarian theology of his predecessors and sources. For all that Irenaeus owes to Justin and some other apologists, he intentionally breaks from their understanding of God precisely in the areas that have a bearing on Trinitarian theology. Irenaeus found his sources inadequate to meet the challenges of 'Gnosticism' because their collective conception of God, and particularly God's relation to the material creation, suffered in many of the same areas as the theology of his 'Gnostic' opponents. This is not to suggest that any 'Gnostic' figures were directly influenced by the writings of the apologists. Rather, my claim is only that in certain areas, the respective theological systems of the apologists and the various 'Gnostic' systems are in the same trajectory of thought, with the latter producing the logical, and often absurd, ends of the theological formulations of the former. Irenaeus perceived the convergences, which explains his clear departure in certain areas from the writings of the apologists, whom he otherwise considers authoritative witnesses to the teachings of the apostles.

Thus, Irenaeus' Trinitarian formulations against the 'Gnostic' divine *Pleroma* are in many ways a *de facto* condemnation of the apologists' understanding of God, and his relation to the Son and the Spirit, as well. When viewed in this light, Irenaeus alters the dominant conception of God, both in his relation to the world and in his relation to other divine or semi-divine beings, in the extant Christian literature of the second century (represented by the 'Gnostics' on the one hand and the apologists on the other). Furthermore, my study will show that Irenaeus' departure from the dominant second century model turns in the direction of more developed Trinitarian thought of the fourth century. Thus, while Irenaeus is not—and cannot be—a pro-Nicene figure, he can be credited with advancing Trinitarian thought in the direction of the fourth century. Accordingly, Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology demands a substantial treatment both for a better understanding of his own thought and for a better understanding of the development of the Trinity in the centuries preceding Nicaea.¹³

13 I will not argue here that Irenaeus is to be credited as a source for this later developed thought, although I am not convinced that such an argument cannot be made. My thesis is more modest with regard to the development of Trinitarian theology, namely, that Irenaeus represents a decisive break from a dominant understanding of the one God, particularly the relationship between Father and Son, and that his trajectory of thought is more in line with the fourth century than the apologists prior to him.

Before proceeding to the methodology and plan of the present study, I want briefly to note two recent works that have managed to avoid the two dominant trajectories outlined above.¹⁴ What follows is not an extensive engagement with their arguments, as that material is more appropriate for the body of this study, but rather an outline of their respective theses and methodologies as a way of both setting my work in continuity with theirs as well as demonstrating the manner in which my approach will be different.

The first work comes from French scholar Jacques Fantino. In his book, *La théologie d'Irénée: Lecture des Écritures en réponse à l'exégèse gnostique. Une approche trinitaire*, Fantino's methodological approach to studying Irenaeus resembles the works of the first trajectory.¹⁵ He seeks not, in other words, to impose foreign categories of thought or theological battles that correspond to the thought of later centuries. Rather, he focuses on Irenaeus' exegetical arguments against 'Gnosticism,' the center and organizing principle of which he locates in the concept of 'economy' (οἰκονομία). Against 'Gnostic' dualistic exegesis, Fantino shows clearly how the economy unites creation and redemption into two parts of the same salvific plan, which is designed to realize the Father's will that each human participate in the divine life in order to attain to the image and likeness of God. The works of God that constitute this economy are decidedly Trinitarian. He writes, "All creation [and] all the economy are the work of the Father, of the Word, and of the Wisdom who act according to this scheme; no other person intervenes in this process and it is for this reason that the Irenaean scheme perhaps legitimately qualifies as Trinitarian" (293). According to Fantino's interpretation of Irenaeus, every work of the economy is an expression of the Trinity.

Where he breaks from the first trajectory, and particularly those scholars who accept an economic Trinitarian theology in Irenaeus, is Fantino's judgment that the manner of the work of Father, Son, and Spirit in the economy *necessitates* an eternal distinction. In other words, the existence of the Son and Spirit is grounded in their eternal relation to the Father. This truth is implied through the Irenaean contrast between the 'uncreated' and the 'created.' In this contrast, the Son and the Spirit always are grouped with the Father on the side of the uncreated. In opposition to the 'Gnostics,' Irenaeus holds that the Son and the Spirit do not come into existence for the purpose of working

14 In keeping with the schema already established, I will hereafter refer to these works as the third trajectory of scholarship regarding Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. It is this third trajectory within which my own work belongs.

15 Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée: Lecture des Écritures en réponse à l'exégèse gnostique. Une approche trinitaire* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994).

in the economy. This is the import of Irenaeus' belief in creation *ex nihilo*. God does not generate the Son and the Spirit in order to form eternal, unformed matter (as the 'Gnostics' held), nor does he first make unformed matter, which the Son then forms into beings. God the Father, through the Son and Spirit, creates beings directly. Thus, the Son and Spirit do not come into existence in order to accomplish some task or fulfill some role. As uncreated beings, their existence is not dependent on the will of the Father; the roles they accomplish in the economy are in virtue of the truth that they themselves are God.

Fantino's guiding thesis, as demonstrated in this important example, is that Irenaeus develops these Trinitarian realities precisely through his interaction with 'Gnosticism.' Questions of the mode of existence of the divine beings prior to creation, their generation from the first cause, and the like were the provenance of 'Gnostic' theology, but through Irenaeus' interaction with and arguments against these theological systems, he comes to reflect on these speculative issues and consistently alters them to align with the witness of scripture. This thesis informs Fantino's method of finding the source of all of Irenaeus' developments in his polemical rejection of 'Gnostic' theology. Thus, Fantino avoids the pitfalls of both trajectories of modern secondary scholarship. He does not approach Irenaeus with foreign categories of thought, nor does he superimpose later Trinitarian concerns onto Irenaeus as do the works of the second trajectory. Fantino neither simplifies Irenaeus' thoughts nor assumes that because Irenaeus wrote in the second century he necessarily lacks any Trinitarian categories, as the works of the first trajectory maintain. Instead, his reading of Irenaeus in the context of his debate with 'Gnosticism' enables him to discern that Trinitarian categories of thought are necessary to understand fully the logic of Irenaeus' polemic.

A second work in the same vein is an important essay from American scholar Michel René Barnes.¹⁶ Barnes does not conduct his Trinitarian inquiry based on the work of Father, Son and Spirit in the economy or any other less speculative aspect of Irenaeus' work. Rather, he assumes that for which Fantino spends the majority of his work justifying¹⁷—the presence of immanent Trinitarian thought in Irenaeus—and proceeds with a more straightforward systematic study of Irenaeus' understanding of the inner relations between Father, Son, and Spirit, a methodological approach that may be likened to the works of the second trajectory.

16 Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," *NV* 7 (2009): 67–106.

17 Surprisingly, however, Barnes never references Fantino's work. He came to these conclusions independently.

Nevertheless, Barnes departs from the works of the second trajectory by refusing to impose anachronistic Trinitarian categories on Irenaeus. As opposed to assuming that οὐσία or ὑπόστασις are appropriate categories for Irenaeus, for example, Barnes identifies the most important theological concept for understanding Irenaeus' Trinitarian thought as πνεῦμα/*spiritus*, not in the sense of Holy Spirit, but in the broader sense of divine essence according to the standard means of referring to God in the second century (e.g., John 4:24). He sees the notion of spirit as the foundation of every aspect of Irenaeus' Trinitarian thought, notably the relationship between the Father and the Son. Since both entities are spirit, both Father and Son mutually interpenetrate or indwell one another such that they are two beings in one entity (Barnes correctly notes that Irenaeus lacks a category of person that would help define their difference). Like Fantino, Barnes links this argumentation to the 'Gnostic' polemic noting how Irenaeus' notion of God as spirit effectively eliminates the concept of 'space' from the Godhead so crucial to the 'Gnostic' theory of emanation in the *Pleroma*. This mutual interpenetration reveals a Father-Son relationship of "reciprocal immanence" existing both in the economy *and* apart from the economy that supports the equality of divinity shared by both Father and Son. Barnes then demonstrates how the same closeness defining the relationship between Father and Son is expanded to the Holy Spirit in Irenaeus' more mature thought. He shows how Irenaeus frequently attributes to the Holy Spirit the same functions he used to show the divinity of the Son. Specifically, he identifies Spirit as a co-creator with the Son, and he gives to the Spirit the title 'Wisdom.' For Irenaeus, to create is to be God, and so the Spirit, like the Son, is God.

Fantino and Barnes, thus, provide a way out of the quagmire that has dominated twentieth century scholarship on Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. They are able to comment meaningfully on Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology without turning him into a fourth century, pro-Nicene figure. For these reasons, the present work is indebted to and builds on the significant work these two scholars have begun.¹⁸ Still, more work remains to be done in the course they have charted. Fantino spends so much space explaining Irenaeus' concept of

18 This statement is not to suggest that I agree with their conclusions on the details of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology *in toto*; indeed I do not and I will address these differences in due course. Nevertheless, my differences with the works of the third trajectory are of a different quality than my differences with the works of the first two trajectories. At the risk of colloquialism, my disagreements with the works of the third trajectory may be viewed as a family dispute insofar as we are in agreement on the primary point that Irenaeus is a genuine Trinitarian theologian.

the economy that he fails to address theological issues necessary to grasping Irenaeus' full Trinitarian theology. For example, there is little discussion in his work on such topics as the unifying principle of Father, Son, and Spirit or the nature of the hierarchy that exists among them in Irenaeus' thought. Moreover, Fantino concentrates on the work of the Son in the incarnation to the detriment of his work prior to the incarnation (a facet that brings him close to certain works of the first trajectory that admit only of an economic Trinity in Irenaeus). Finally, Fantino's work has had little effect on subsequent studies on Irenaeus, particularly those in English. Despite Fantino's convincing case, Irenaeus remains only an economic Trinitarian thinker in the majority view of scholarship.¹⁹ In his more traditional approach, Barnes addresses many of these Trinitarian questions; nevertheless, his article length treatment does not allow space to consider all of the pertinent Irenaeian passages, both those passages that support his points and those that detract. Finally, while both scholars consider Irenaeus' theology in relation to 'Gnosticism,' missing from their works is a consideration of his Trinitarian theology in relation to the apologists' theology.²⁰ The nature of Irenaeus' Trinitarian advancement is understood best in this context, and this comparative method will be the primary contribution of the present study.

Methodology

Critical treatments of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology to date have been limited; therefore, the burden of this study will be an engagement with the primary sources, namely *Haer.* and *Epid.* To support the thesis of this study, I will analyze Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology in contrast to that of the apologists in order to display his Trinitarian developments. I will limit the apologists' works to the following: (1) the *Apologies* and *Dialogue with Trypho*

19 Three prominent examples include Minns, *Irenaeus* (repr, 2010), Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (2001), and the various essays in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (2012). A quotation from Peter Widdicombe's essay in the latter collection demonstrates the prevailing assumption, "It is with the economic activity of God that Irenaeus is mainly concerned throughout his theology and there is, accordingly, little sense of an intimate, immanent life of God into which the believer may be drawn." Widdicombe, "Irenaeus and the Knowledge of God as Father: Text and Context," in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 141–49. A notable exception is Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation* who uses Fantino often and, although not as direct and clear as Fantino, hints at the same conclusions.

20 Both scholars give passing glances at the apologists' works but do not offer the sustained comparative analysis that drives my study.

of Justin (hereafter 1 *Apol.*, 2 *Apol.* and *Dial.*), (2) the *Plea for the Christians* of Athenagoras of Athens (hereafter *Leg.*), and (3) the letter *To Autolytus* of Theophilus of Antioch (hereafter *Autol.*).²¹ Although writing in different times and different places in the Roman Empire, these three figures witness a consistency in their understanding of God, the Logos, and the Spirit that make them apt candidates for comparison to Irenaeus. As I will show in chapter one, Irenaeus knew and used both Justin and Theophilus' respective works as sources. He did not know Athenagoras' work. I use Athenagoras in this comparative study only in order to develop more fully the context of second century Apologetic theology prior to Irenaeus. In other words, the use of three interlocutors instead of one or even two further demonstrates that the theology in their works is neither individual nor provincial but is representative of second century theology in general.²²

The best method of accentuating the differences between the Trinitarian theology of Irenaeus and that of the Apologists is simply to juxtapose their respective treatments of Trinitarian themes. Accordingly, each chapter will work with a principle theme of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology, engaging first the presence of that theme in the Apologists' thought followed by a more comprehensive treatment of the theme in Irenaeus' thought. Although the focus of this study is Irenaeus, I will proceed in this order to better display the innovations Irenaeus makes upon his sources.²³ I will draw out the differences in their thought through a variety of methods, the most important of which include:

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- 21 Where not noted, translations of these apologetic texts are mine. Critical editions are as follows: *Justin, Apologie pour les Chrétiens*, trans., intro., and notes Charles Munier, SC 507 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006); *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec Tryphon*, ed. and trans. Philip Bobichon, Paradosis 47.1 and 2 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003); *Athénagore, Supplique au Sujet des Chrétiens; et, Sur la Résurrection des Morts*, trans., intro., and notes Bernard Pouderon, SC 379 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992); and *Theophili Antiocheni, Ad Autolytum*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich, Patristische Texte und Studien 44 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995).
 - 22 My thesis that Irenaeus intentionally alters the theology of his sources to meet the demands of 'Gnosticism,' of course, can only apply in the strict sense to Justin and Theophilus. Nevertheless, to the extent that I can establish a common Apologetic theology on these issues, it can be maintained that Irenaeus alters this theology, even if he only knew of it directly from two sources. I will hereafter refer to these three apologists with the capitalized title 'Apologists' to indicate a collective group. When I use the title 'Apologists' in the following work, I mean only to indicate Justin, Athenagoras, and Theophilus.
 - 23 The one exception to this method comes in chapter one, where I address the setting of each figure. Here I will engage Irenaeus first to emphasize that he is the primary figure in this study.

(1) a comparison of key texts in which one or more of the divine entities are discussed; (2) a comparison of the use of the same Trinitarian titles (e.g., 'Father,' 'Logos,' 'Wisdom,' etc.); and (3) an inquiry into the possible sources of certain constructions or arguments.²⁴ In all cases, I will demonstrate where Irenaeus'

24 In discussing the philosophical influences of the Apologists, I will not be concerned to identify specific figures, a method which has been attempted elsewhere. Mark J. Edwards, for example, asserts that Numenius is a direct influence upon Justin. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin," *JTS* 42, no. 1 (1991): 17–34. Conversely, Osborn argues that Justin's Middle Platonic source is Albinus. Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 47 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1973), 22. While these authors cite specific parallels from their preferred philosophical figure, by the second century these philosophical elements largely have become commonplaces among different figures of one school, such as Middle Platonism, not to mention several different philosophical traditions, such as Middle Platonism and Stoicism. This process results in what is often called 'eclecticism' and this characteristic of the state of second century philosophy has been noted by many scholars. For example, see Michel Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église: De Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957), 37–40. Therefore, my purpose will be to show only that the ideas of the divine nature offered by these figures were common in second century eclectic philosophy. My primary source to this end will be the Middle Platonic work *Didaskalikos* (hereafter *Didask.*), not because I believe that there is a direct link between it and the Apologists (indeed I do not), but because the *Didask.* commonly is held as representative of a large segment of Middle Platonist thought during the second century. On this point, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 272. In addition, in several places I will note similarities between the Apologists and Philo of Alexandria. The question of Philo's influence upon the apologists has been a subject of contention among scholars for the majority of the previous century. The difficulty in assessing this influence, as nearly every treatment acknowledges, is that while there are extensive similarities between Philo and for example Justin, Justin neither mentions Philo nor quotes him directly. Moreover, the doctrinal similarities are far from precise and the exegetical treatments of scripture rarely correspond to offer any degree of certainty. At one end of the spectrum on this question stands E.R. Goodenough who finds in Justin a strong dependence on Philo and attempts to correlate nearly every doctrine. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Verlag Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), esp. 139–75. On the other end stands Leslie W. Barnard who rejects any Philonic dependence opting instead for a purely Middle Platonic influence. Barnard, *Justin Martyr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 92–95. For a good overview of the problem, see David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 94–118, esp. 97–105. Commenting on this subject lies beyond the purview of the present work, although the similarities between the Apologists and Philo are too strong to dismiss. Thus, I will note certain similarities not to argue for a direct correspondence, but to help place the Apologists in a larger, Hellenistic exegetical tradition that encompasses both Philo and the Apologists.

understanding and thought categories diverge from or develop upon those of the Apologists. As noted earlier, I will explore and, where pertinent, detail Irenaeus' polemic with 'Gnosticism' as the occasion for these departures.

Although some scholars, in an attempt to respect the development of Irenaeus' thought from the beginning of *Haer.* to the *Epid.*, have organized the chapters of their studies according to Irenaeus' works (i.e., chapter one treats *Haer.* 1 and 2, chapter two treats *Haer.* 3, and so on),²⁵ I will organize my study according to theme. While I recognize that this method runs the risk of importing a false, systematic arrangement on Irenaeus' works, it is necessary because every Trinitarian facet here engaged overlaps several books of *Haer.*, not to mention both *Haer.* and *Epid.* To limit my discussion of Irenaeus' views on a subject to one book, the Father to *Haer.* 2 for example, would be to miss his full and mature understanding of that subject.²⁶

Plan

The primary factor in the differences between Irenaeus and the Apologists with respect to Trinitarian theology is the varying historical circumstances that occasioned their works. Therefore, in the first chapter I will consider the different settings of Irenaeus and the Apologists and the subsequent occasions of their respective writings. As Irenaeus is the primary figure of this study, the majority of text in the first chapter will be devoted to his setting. I will engage the respective settings of the Apologists only to ascertain the differences between their contexts and occasions for writing, and the same of Irenaeus.

In the second chapter, I will engage Irenaeus' understanding of God/Father and its implications for the unity of the Godhead. I will show how the Apologists conceived of God as Creator but lacked a robust notion of him as

25 Barnes' treatment is a good example of this method, although Barnes himself has to step outside its confines to make certain points. Briggman employs this method on a large scale. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, esp. 7–8.

26 While my method will not reveal it as clearly as a linear method, I acknowledge a development in Irenaeus' thought as his work progresses, particularly regarding the Holy Spirit, a development I will address in chapter four. Incidentally, my method precludes me from making a definitive judgment on an open question in Irenaeus studies, namely, the dating of *Epid.* relative to *Haer.* Nonetheless, Irenaeus' most developed Trinitarian statements come from the later books of *Haer.* and the *Epid.* indicating that the latter was written after the former. Given the textual evidence that Irenaeus wrote the books of *Haer.* in the order that we now possess, *Epid.* is likely a more mature work. On this point, see Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 5–7.

Father. Moreover, their formulation of the divine transcendence led them to speak of God in spatial terms (God is 'above' or somehow 'removed' from the material world), which has ramifications for their understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Conversely, Irenaeus develops the unique relationship between the Father and the Son through his use of the divine title 'Father.' Moreover, he redefines transcendence allowing him to remove all spatial imagery from his conception of the divine being. Thus, Irenaeus' argument here establishes the logic that dictates his entire Trinitarian theology. This chapter will entail a discussion of these figures' use of theological language.

In chapter three, I will turn to Irenaeus' understanding of the nature of the Logos/Son. This study will involve both a general analysis of the Logos theology operative in these works as well as a particular analysis of these figures' respective understandings of the generation of the Logos from God. I will show how the Apologists' Logos theology necessarily subordinates the Logos to God. As they conceived of God as distant from material creation, metaphorically conceived with spatial language, they were forced to make the Logos the active power of God in the world in the manner of Middle Platonist thought, thus making the separate existence of the Logos dependent upon his work in the economy. Irenaeus' theology does not stand in the same need of an intermediary in creation; therefore, the existence of the Logos/Son is dependent not on his work, but on his divine nature as eternal Logos. Furthermore, Irenaeus' rejection of the 'Gnostic' theory of emanation reveals his understanding of the generation of the Logos that supports the divine, eternal nature of the Logos.

Chapter four will address Irenaeus' pneumatology. For the Apologists, the Spirit is limited to a prophetic role. Irenaeus enlarges this limited role by attributing the work of creation to the Spirit and calling the Spirit 'Sophia.' Not only does 'Sophia' correspond with 'Logos,' implying that the Sophia is present alongside of the Logos with and in God eternally, but the title also describes a role of the Spirit in the economy of salvation, namely that of binding together or completing the creation. This independent role suggests a full personality of the Spirit never witnessed in the pneumatology of the Apologists.

Finally, chapter five will concentrate on those passages in these figures' respective works that address the relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit. For Irenaeus, these passages occur for the most part in the context of the economy, particularly in their cooperative works of creation and redemption. As I will show, a hierarchy emerges among the different entities akin to the hierarchy evident in the Apologists' understanding of the natures of the Son and Spirit. Even so, while the logic of the Apologists' argument demands a hierarchy of gradating divinity, or an ontological hierarchy, Irenaeus' hierarchy is not to

be conceived of in terms of gradations of divinity, but instead in terms of differing economic functions, or a functional hierarchy. For Irenaeus, the Father is the source of the divine actions performed by his agents the Son and the Spirit who, in turn, are obedient to the Father's will. Yet, the logic of Irenaeus' argument demands that the same quality of divinity be shared among all three entities. Their equal divinity provides the Son and the Spirit the power to enact the will of the Father in the economy.

Throughout the work, I will be concerned to demonstrate where my argument departs from the works of the first and second trajectories, as well as nuances some of the works of the third trajectory outlined above. The cumulative effect of the argument will demonstrate both the importance of Trinitarian theology to Irenaeus' understanding of scripture and the significant contribution this figure makes to the development of Trinitarian theology in the Patristic era.

The Dissimilar Contexts of Irenaeus and the Apologists

In this opening chapter, I will attempt to provide a context to understand Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology and, in particular, the nature of its progression from earlier writings, by addressing the *Sitz im Leben* in which Irenaeus lived and wrote. This process requires (1) an investigation into the influences upon his thought acquired from the various geographical settings of his life, and (2) an investigation into the occasion for Irenaeus' writing, which will involve a discussion of his methodology and manner of argumentation. After treating these topics, I will address the respective settings of the Apologists. Here, I will explore only the manner in which their respective historical contexts differ from that of Irenaeus, both in terms of the influences upon their thought and their respective occasions for writing.

Irenaeus

Life

The only established date in Irenaeus' life is 177 C.E., at which time Eusebius reports Irenaeus in Rome acting as presbyter of the church of Lyons carrying letters from imprisoned Gallican Christians to the Roman Bishop Eleutherus.¹ From this date, along with several autobiographical details in *Haer.*, Irenaeus' birth often is placed around 130 C.E. as any birth date after 140 C.E. would have made him too young for the presbyterate in 177 C.E.² Nothing is known of his family of origin, although he likely became a follower of Christ at a young

1 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.4.1. The year is figured from Eusebius' timing, which places the trip in the seventeenth year of Marcus Aurelius' reign. This date has been challenged by Timothy D. Barnes who places the event at 180 C.E. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 61–62n40. He is followed in this later dating by the author of a recent article on Irenaeus life, namely, Paul Parvis, "Who Was Irenaeus? An Introduction to the Man and His Work," in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 13–24. The difference is important in relating the incident to Roman History as the later date potentially locates it after the death of Marcus Aurelius. For my purposes, the difference is inconsequential.

2 For a detailed argument to this end, see M.S. Enslin, "Irenaeus: Mostly Prolegomena," *HTR* 40 (1947): 137–65.

age. In a letter written to one Florinus and preserved by Eusebius, Irenaeus claims to have heard Polycarp, the aged and revered bishop of Smyrna, as a youth.³ This autobiographical data suggests, as I will develop momentarily, that Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor where Polycarp was bishop and where Irenaeus specifies seeing him.

Concurrent with Irenaeus' emissary trip to Rome, and perhaps one of its motivating factors (Eusebius notes that the letters Irenaeus carried also addressed the 'Montanist' controversy in Phrygia), the Gallican churches of Lyons and nearby Vienne experienced a devastating wave of persecutions that claimed the lives of many Christians, including the aged bishop of Lyons, Pothinus.⁴ Although information is uncertain, Irenaeus' presence in Rome likely contributed to his escape from the fate of martyrdom. Eusebius reports that imprisoned confessors awaiting execution had written the letters Irenaeus was carrying to Eleutherus.⁵ Presumably, then, Irenaeus left Lyons after some Christians had been put in jail but before the large scale targeting and killing of Christians began. In any case, upon his return from Rome, Irenaeus ascended to the episcopacy of Lyons, and later, perhaps due to his success in restoring Christianity to persecution-torn Gaul, he assumed the role of bishop over the entire geographical area.⁶

As noted previously, Irenaeus was prolific in his role as bishop. During these years he became embroiled in the controversies that would mark his bishopric and his legacy to the church, most notably, the dispute with the various theological communities called 'Gnostics,' which also entailed, as I will show, a related disagreement with the followers of Marcion. These encounters were the impetus for his two extant works, *Haer.* and *Epid.*, which, because they were written while he was bishop, may be dated between 177 and 200 C.E.⁷

3 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.5–7. Irenaeus also makes passing reference to the event in *Haer.* 3.3.4.

4 The account of the martyrs of Lyons originally was written as an encyclical letter to the churches in Asia and Phrygia. It is extant only in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.1–5.3.3. For a general introduction and helpful notes on the account of the martyrs of Lyons, see Herbert Musurillo, intro. and trans. *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, vol. 2, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xx–xxii, 62–85.

5 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.3.4.

6 Other ancient sources report that Irenaeus ascended to a status higher than that of provincial bishop, the role his predecessor Pothinus played. Various works in the *Acta sanctorum* report Irenaeus' efforts to evangelize the entire area. Enslin, "Irenaeus," 147n26.

7 In *Haer.* and *Epid.*, Irenaeus writes from a position of authority—definitively commenting on which books of scripture should be read, etc.—suggesting he has attained the office of bishop by the time of his writing. Moreover, as I will show subsequently, the content of

Nevertheless, Irenaeus found himself engaged in other pastoral duties as well, which resulted in numerous treatises and letters that are now lost and known only through Eusebius.⁸

The last reference to him in Eusebius' work finds Irenaeus involved in the so-called Quatrodecimen Controversy, which concerned the proper day to celebrate the Paschal Feast. At this point, the majority of churches had begun to celebrate the feast on a Sunday, although a minority from Asia Minor continued to celebrate on a fixed date, the fourteenth of Nisan, in accordance with the Jewish Passover. Eusebius notes that Roman Bishop Victor, in accordance with the decisions of local synods, pronounced the excommunication of these churches. Although Irenaeus' own province of Gaul assented to Victor's decision, Irenaeus wrote letters to the heads of certain churches, including to Victor himself, defending the churches of Asia Minor and their observance of this ancient practice.⁹ The small account, of which we know little, is telling to Irenaeus' long connection to Asia Minor. Given the timing of Victor's bishopric, this account also confirms that Irenaeus lived well into the last decade of the second century. Although the circumstances of Irenaeus' death are unknown, most scholars place it around 200 C.E.¹⁰

Influences

The biographical details of his life I have explored strongly suggest that Irenaeus spent extended periods in three different geographical locations. The references to his acquaintance with Polycarp, as well as Irenaeus' defense

Haer. 1 demonstrates that he has already spent time in Rome, which occurred prior to his ascendancy to bishop. The duration of the writing of *Haer.* likely spans a number of years, as the prefaces to each book of *Haer.* confirms they are written at different times (in each case, Irenaeus assumes that his reader already has received and is familiar with the previous books). Nonetheless, as I noted in the introduction, the methodology of the current work does not depend on this progression of thought. To be more precise with the dating of his extant works is difficult and unnecessary.

8 According to Eusebius, Irenaeus wrote a tract entitled *On Knowledge* against the Greeks, another entitled *On the Ogdoad* against the Valentinians, and other various addresses. Eusebius refers to the letter to Florinus as *On Monarchy* or *That God is not the Author of Evil*, as well as another letter to one Blastus entitled *On Schism*. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.2, 26.1.

9 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 24.11–17.

10 Like information of his birth, no reliable information exists concerning the circumstances of his death. Tradition regards Irenaeus as a martyr, but witnesses to this tradition are late and unreliable. Most scholars believe that references to his status as a martyr have confused him with a later figure, Irenaeus of Sirmium, who was martyred under Diocletian in 304 C.E. Enslin, "Irenaeus," 146–47.

of provincial practices of Asian churches, suggest that Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, possibly in Smyrna. Polycarp was martyred at some point between the years 155 and 160 C.E.,¹¹ which, given the approximate date of Irenaeus' birth, means that Irenaeus spent at least his first 20 years in his home country. Considering the likely date of his death and the fixed date of his emissary trip to Rome, it is also probable Irenaeus spent his final 25–30 years in Gaul. Reasons for Irenaeus' relocation to Lyons from Asia Minor are unknown, although there is evidence of a strong relationship between the churches in Asia Minor and the churches in Gaul around this time.¹² For example, the account of the martyrdoms at the churches of Vienne and Lyons was written specifically for the churches in Asia and Phrygia.¹³ Moreover, two of the martyrs mentioned in that account are thought to have originated from Pergamum and Phrygia, both provinces of Asia.¹⁴ This evidence suggests the route from Asia Minor to Gaul was traversed by more Christians than Irenaeus. Perhaps Irenaeus' connection with one of these Gallican Christians while both were in Asia Minor led Irenaeus to Gaul.

Whatever the reason, the trip makes it likely that he sojourned for a time in Rome.¹⁵ Rome's central location between Smyrna and Gaul made the city a natural respite for travelers, and given the prominence of both the city and the church of the city around the middle second century, a young Christian scholar likely would have felt drawn to stay there for a time.¹⁶ Irenaeus' in

11 There has been considerable amount of debate on this dating, although this range of years seems generally acceptable to most scholars. The most recent study places the date at 157 C.E. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 368–73.

12 Jared Secord tentatively suggests that Irenaeus was invited to Gaul by the people of Lyons in anticipation of the aged Pothinus' impending death, based largely on evidence of similar such invitations to learned Greek men on the part of the people of Gaul. Secord, "The Cultural Geography of a Greek Christian: Irenaeus from Smyrna to Lyons," in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 25–33. A more likely conjecture, in my mind, is Secord's second proposal that in traveling west, Irenaeus was consciously emulating Paul's travels in the book of Acts, thus continuing in Paul's footsteps. Ultimately, however, Irenaeus' silence leaves these and similar proposals as nothing more than intriguing speculations.

13 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.3.

14 Enslin notes a tradition asserting that Irenaeus' predecessor Pothinus hailed from Asia Minor. Enslin, "Irenaeus," 149.

15 This argument has been made by Michael Slusser, "How Much Did Irenaeus Learn from Justin?" *SP* 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 515–20. The Roman stay is assumed in recent treatments of Irenaeus' life, notably, Secord, "Cultural Geography," in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 29. Secord even posits that *Haer.* was addressed to a fellow cleric from Rome.

16 Several influences upon Irenaeus' thought can be explained only through positing a sojourn in Rome. Examples I will explore momentarily include Justin and various pupils

depth knowledge of the history of the church in Rome, displayed in his argument regarding apostolic succession in *Haer.* 3.3.3, as well as his emissary trip as a presbyter (his knowledge of the church and city would have made him an apt candidate for the trip) are further points of evidence in favor of an extended stay in Rome. With his experiences in these three geographical locations, Irenaeus would have been influenced by a variety of different teachers and trends of burgeoning Christian thought, several of which deserve attention.

Justin

The most important of the influences upon Irenaeus for my purposes was Justin. Many aspects of Irenaeus' theology correspond to the theology of the Martyr, and the degree of dependence suggests that Irenaeus was exposed to Justin's writings while sojourning in Rome. Circumstantial evidence even makes personal contact possible. Justin is in Rome at least by the latter half of Antoninus Pius' reign (138 to 161 C.E.). Furthermore, the account, or *Acta*, of Justin's martyrdom states that he frequently taught others who came to him for instruction in the Christian faith.¹⁷ This evidence suggests that Justin would have been a well-known Christian teacher in Rome precisely during the time when Irenaeus would have been there. And as Michael Slusser has noted, "There were not so many learned Christians at that time that two such stars, one at the start of his career, the other at his zenith, could easily have passed unnoticed by each other."¹⁸ Regardless of the validity of a personal acquaintance, it is clear that Irenaeus knew at least one of Justin's works and regarded him as a faithful witness to the teaching of the apostles. He quotes Justin twice, both instances as an authority against Marcion.¹⁹ Moreover, he works hard to

of Valentinus. Irenaeus notes in *Haer.* 1 that at an earlier point in his life he had encountered these 'Gnostics' and their commentaries upon scripture. See *Haer.* 1. *Pref.* 2. In the mid-second century, Valentinianism is most concentrated in Rome. Robert Grant notes two more influences Irenaeus would have received in Rome that I will not explore in detail here, namely, Clement and Hermas. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, *The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 1997), 38–40.

17 Musurillo, "The Martyrdom of Saints Justin, Chariton, Charito, Evelpistus, Hierax, Paeon, Liberion, and their Community," in *Christian Martyrs*, 42–61. For specifics of Justin's historical setting, see below pp. 44–46.

18 Slusser, "How Much," 520.

19 *Haer.* 4.6.2 and 5.27.2. The first quotation comes from a lost work of Justin's, possibly entitled *Against Marcion*. The second quotation is not attributed to any specific work, although the citation's context suggests that it may have come from the same work as the first quotation.

separate Justin from his erstwhile disciple Tatian, whom Irenaeus regards as a heretic.²⁰

Although Irenaeus' knowledge of and dependence upon Justin is almost universally acknowledged, the nature of my thesis demands some exploration into the veracity of this claim which may also aid in the specification of the nature of the dependence. J. Armitage Robinson may be credited with most convincingly demonstrating the relation between Justin and Irenaeus. In the introduction to his 1920 English translation of the Armenian text of the *Epid.*,²¹ Robinson illustrated Justin's influence upon Irenaeus through a close comparison of passages in the works of the two figures. For example, Robinson brings together Irenaeus' *Epid.* 57 and Justin's *1 Apol.* 32, both of which center on the scriptural passage of Jacob's blessing of Judah (Genesis 49:8–12) and discerns nine striking parallels that demonstrate a direct dependence.²² Among the most compelling for supporting a dependent relationship are the following: (1) Justin quotes the Genesis passage in an abbreviated form, and Irenaeus uses the exact same abbreviated form; (2) both figures offer an idiosyncratic interpretation of the robe of the prince of Judah in the Genesis passage as "those who believe on him,"²³ or in other words, the church, which contrasts to the more universal interpretation of the robe signifying Christ's passion;²⁴ and (3) both figures inexplicably attribute the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24 ("a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel") to the prophet Isaiah.²⁵

These parallels demonstrate not only that Irenaeus knew and depended upon Justin's thought in his own theology, but that the nature of the dependence was textual. In other words, Irenaeus likely had Justin's works in front of him when writing *Epid.* and other works.²⁶ The correspondence of abbreviated scriptural quotations not found anywhere else, along with identical idiosyncratic interpretations of odd scriptural images that run against the grain of the majority of traditional interpretations support such a conclusion.

20 *Haer.* 1.28.1.

21 Robinson, intro. and trans., *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (London: S.P.C.K., 1920).

22 Robinson, *Demonstration*, 7–11.

23 *1 Apol.* 32, as quoted in Robinson, *Demonstration*, 8.

24 Robinson, *Demonstration*, 8.

25 Irenaeus does not attribute the Balaam prophecy to Isaiah in this passage, but elsewhere (*Haer.* 3.9.2).

26 This does not of course rule out a personal acquaintance posited above. Indeed, it may have been the result of a personal friendship that Irenaeus was afforded Justin's manuscripts.

Other scholars have suggested that Irenaeus first found the outline of his famous doctrine of recapitulation in Justin's works.²⁷ The evidence for this claim comes from one of Irenaeus' direct quotes of Justin. He writes, "In his book against Marcion, Justin says it well: 'I would not have believed the Lord Himself, if he had announced any other God than our Creator, Maker, and Nourisher. But because from the one God, who both made this world and formed us and contains and administers all things, the only-begotten Son came to us, summing up his own handiwork in himself, my faith toward him is firm, and my love toward the Father immovable, the Lord providing both to us.'²⁸ While Irenaeus would develop this doctrine significantly, the phrase *suum plasma in semetipsum recapitulans* makes it difficult to deny that Justin first provided the bare bones of the theory.

This opinion is not universal among Irenaean scholars, however. Some have suggested that the direct quotation from Justin ends after *Fabricatorem* making the second half of the statement, including the poignant part about recapitulation, Irenaeus' comment on Justin and, thus, leaving recapitulation original to Irenaeus.²⁹ The evidence for this position comes not from the logic of the text, but from Eusebius, whose quotation of *Haer.* 4.6.2 does not include the recapitulation passage.³⁰ Without the witness of Eusebius, however, it is hard to see how anyone would reach such a conclusion.³¹ First, Eusebius'

27 Notably, Benoît, Harnack, Loofs, and the editors of the classic editions of *Haer.*, namely, Grabe, Massuet, Harvey, and Rousseau. Most recently, this argument has been accepted by Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 83 and, in a more detailed argument, Slusser, "How Much," 519–20.

28 "*Et bene Justinus in eo libro qui est ad Marcionem ait quoniam: Ipsi quoque Domino non credidissim alterum Deum annuntianti praeter Fabricatorem et Factorem et Nutritorem nostrum; sed quoniam ab uno Deo, qui et hunc mundum fecit et nos plasmavit et omnia continent et administrat, unigenitus Filius venit ad nos, suum plasma in semetipsum recapitulans, firma est mea ad eum fides et immobilis erga Patrem dilectio, utraque Domino nobis praebente.*" *Haer.* 4.6.2.

29 Notably Grant, *Irenaeus*, 39 and Robinson, "On a Quotation from Justin Martyr in Irenaeus," *JTS* 31 (1930): 374–78.

30 Eusebius' Greek is as follows, "Καὶ καλῶς ὁ Ἰουστίνος ἐν τῷ πρὸς Μαρκίωνα συντάγματι φησιν ὅτι αὐτῷ τῷ Κυρίῳ οὐκ ἂν ἐπέισθην ἄλλον θεὸν καταγγέλλοντι παρὰ τὸν Δημιουργόν." *Hist. Eccl.* 4.18.19. The Greek text comes from Rousseau, SC 100:441.

31 Significantly, scholars in support of the shorter quotation offer little support for their position. Robinson may be an exception, although his arguments are unconvincing and, significantly, not repeated by Grant. More telling, Robinson is transparent in the fact that he is motivated in his argument by the specter of Loofs' thesis that Irenaeus' theology is not original but is drawn entirely from other sources. While he is correct that attributing recapitulation to Justin on the basis of this passage is the crowning point of Loofs' argument, it is not the case that attribution of the entire passage to Justin is tantamount to

quotation cuts off at mid-sentence meaning that, if only this quotation were original to Justin, then Irenaeus adds *et Factorem et Nutritorem nostrum to Fabricator*, which is implausible given the fact that *Fabricator* alone is sufficient to make the argument of the passage. Second, the passage itself is clearly a unit with the second part ("But because from the one God . . . the only-begotten Son came to us . . . my faith towards him is firm") resolving the problem posed in the first part ("I would not have believed the Lord Himself. . ."). In other words, the origin of the Son in the Father, supported by his recapitulating the Father's creation, assures that the Son did not preach a different God. Finally, the entire passage supports Irenaeus' argument and his introduction to the passage where he writes, ". . . thus we also ought to have a firm and immovable love in the Father."³² Conversely, if Irenaeus' quotation of Justin is only the truncated version provided by Eusebius, it is difficult to see what more the quotation from Justin provides Irenaeus' argument.

The textual evidence, therefore, overwhelmingly supports the position that the longer quotation, including the recapitulation phrase, is original to Justin. This is significant for my purposes because it demonstrates again the dependence of Irenaeus on Justin. As most scholars note, Irenaeus uses the doctrine of recapitulation as the basis for his argument for the unity of God and the unity of scripture as it gets worked out in the later books of *Haer.* That such an important doctrine to Irenaeus' thought is first suggested to him by Justin suggests he possessed a high level of trust and respect for Justin's authority.

One more similarity deserves mention, namely, the two figures' understandings of the Septuagint theophany passages. Justin interprets the subject of these various appearances of God as the Logos rather than the Most High God. His principle examples of the theophanies include: (1) the visitation of the three angels to Abraham at Mamre, (2) the angel who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, (3) the Lord who appeared and spoke to Jacob in his vision of the ladder, and (4) the visitation to Moses in the burning bush. Irenaeus offers the same interpretation of the theophanies, which in itself is not significant as this appears to be the majority interpretation in the early church prior to Augustine. What is significant, however, is that in *Epid.* 44–46, Irenaeus uses the same four scriptural examples as Justin.³³ The use of the

denying Irenaeus' genius in formulating his doctrine of recapitulation. As noted, Irenaeus expands fully on Justin's nascent theory. In any case, such a fear must not dictate one's conclusion on this question. I will briefly return to Loofs' theory below.

³² *Haer.* 4.6.2.

³³ With the visitation to Jacob, Justin also highlights the account of the man who wrestled with Jacob as a manifestation of the Logos, which Irenaeus does not mention.

same four theophany stories, when other available examples seem more obvious or appropriate (Theophilus, for example, used an altogether different scriptural example to make his point, namely the voice of God that calls to Adam in Eden),³⁴ again suggests that Irenaeus has drawn the form of this argument from Justin.

It appears, then, that Irenaeus is prone not only to be influenced by Justin's theological conclusions, which he uses as a springboard to develop his own theories (e.g., recapitulation), but also to make scriptural arguments in the same manner, often, it would seem, failing to consult scripture independently of Justin (e.g., the abbreviated passage of scripture and the misattribution of the Numbers prophecy) or going with Justin's obscure interpretation of a passage over the dominant one handed down. This is a startling claim given Irenaeus' own stated preference for traditional understandings of scripture, but it emphasizes the respect Irenaeus must have had for Justin. The strong trust and endorsement of Justin as an authentic interpreter of the apostles' words, both in Irenaeus' statements and in his practice, make the points at which Irenaeus departs from Justin even more significant for it implies that he had a significant motive. In other words, given the numerous parallels between the thought, argumentation, and exegesis of the two figures, we ought to assume that any divergence between them was intentional on the part of Irenaeus. This prompts the important query of the reason for the departure, a query with which I will be concerned through much of this work.

Theophilus

A second important influence on Irenaeus' thought is Theophilus. Unlike with his use of Justin, however, Irenaeus does not cite Theophilus by name or directly quote his work; furthermore, no compelling geographical evidence suggests the connection. Although Irenaeus originated in Asia Minor, roughly the same area as Theophilus' city of Antioch, by the time Theophilus writes, and by the time Irenaeus shows evidence of knowing him,³⁵ he is already in Lyons, far removed

Nonetheless, Justin's account of Jacob's story in *Dial.* 58.10–11 confirms his greater interest in the ladder vision because here, rather than the wrestling episode, the Lord speaks to Jacob. Moreover, when Justin recounts the theophany examples in a summary fashion in *Dial.* 86, he highlights only the ladder vision. Irenaeus is drawn to the ladder vision as opposed to the wrestling account because the ladder provides a type of the cross. See *Epid.* 45.

34 *Autol.* 2.22.

35 In this work I will assume the recent thesis put forward by Briggman regarding Irenaeus' use of Theophilus. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, esp. 97–103, a version of which also is printed as Briggman, "Dating Irenaeus' Acquisition of Theophilus' Correspondence *To Autolycus*:"

from Antioch. Nonetheless, a significant number of parallels exist between the works of the two writers, and these parallels suggest a literary connection. While earlier scholars identified the parallels,³⁶ Loofs was the first to make a thorough and decisive link between the two writers.³⁷ In fact, Loofs attempted to demonstrate through the tools of source criticism that significant portions of *Haer.* consisted of unattributed, direct quotes from Theophilus' lost work *Against Marcion*.³⁸ Unfortunately, as noted previously, Loofs' influential work caused a general devaluing of the unity of Irenaeus' thought and of Irenaeus as an original thinker among scholars in the years following its publication.³⁹ The latter half of the last century, however, witnessed an increasing trend among scholars to reject Loofs' atomistic approach to Irenaeus while at the same time retaining his insights regarding the connection between Irenaeus and Theophilus.⁴⁰ While the connection between Irenaeus and Theophilus still is not accepted as widely as the connection between Irenaeus and Justin,

A Pneumatological Perspective," *SP* 45 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 397–402. Briggman's thesis asserts that Irenaeus knew and used Theophilus' *Autol.* but that he did not acquire the work until sometime in the midst of writing *Haer.* 3. I find Briggman's thesis persuasive in explaining Irenaeus' pneumatological development and will return to it in detail in chapter four. See below pp. 166–67. For the specifics of Theophilus' setting, see below pp. 48–50.

36 Notably, Robinson, *Demonstration*, 49–60.

37 Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*. For full bibliographic reference, see above p. 2n4.

38 Loofs comes from and represents a German tradition of scholarship devoted to identifying the sources that make up a historical work, the so-called '*Quellenforschung*.' Loofs' point of departure emerges in his identifying supposedly incompatible theological ideas within Irenaeus' work (e.g., *Adoptionschristologie* and *Geistchristologie*) and attributing them to different sources apart from any prior attempt to identify an alternate reason that would account for the discrepancy (such as the progression of Irenaeus' thought), much less an attempt to identify coherence. Loofs bases his argument for the connection between Theophilus and Irenaeus on this lost work, mentioned by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.24), as opposed to the extant *Autol.*, because the reference to Marcus Aurelius' death (180 C.E.) in *Autol.* 3.27 makes the latter work contemporary with Irenaeus' *Haer.* and renders the literary dependence he discerns impossible.

39 The exception here is Hitchcock, who effectively critiqued Loofs' assumptions and methodology. Hitchcock, "Loofs' Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a Source of Irenaeus," *JTS* 38 (1937): 130–39, 255–66.

40 Several important works show the flaws of Loofs' thesis as well as the general unity of Irenaeus' work and, therefore, reversed the scholarly trend of devaluing Irenaeus, notably, Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation* and Philippe Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée: unité du livre IV de l'Adversus Haereses* (Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, 1978). As a result of these studies, Irenaeus scholars no longer need to justify the validity of their projects against Loofs' conclusions.

the majority opinion after Loofs asserts that Irenaeus knew and was influenced by Theophilus' work. Nevertheless, against Loofs' reconstruction of a non-extant work, scholars now demonstrate the parallels between Irenaeus' work and Theophilus' *Autol.*

Two parallels central to Loofs' thesis remain critical in establishing Theophilus' influence upon Irenaeus. The first parallel features the common use of the phrase 'hands of God' to refer to the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit.⁴¹ Both writers connect the phrase to the work of the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit in creating human beings, and both writers ground the idea in the same scriptural passage, Genesis 1:26, despite the absence of the phrase 'hands of God' in that verse (and its presence elsewhere in scripture). For Theophilus and Irenaeus, Genesis 1:26 provides an account of God's command to his agents, the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit, to create human beings.

A second parallel between Irenaeus and Theophilus concerns the identification of the title 'Sophia' (Σοφία, Wisdom) with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, both figures quote the same verse in connection with the identification, namely, Psalm 33/2:6.⁴² In fact, both writers use the passage not only to support the identification of the Holy Spirit and the Sophia of God, but also to develop their twin notions of the Spirit as creative agent alongside of the Son.⁴³

Perhaps even more compelling evidence of the connection between Irenaeus and Theophilus than the parallels themselves is the absence of these theological tropes in other writers of the same period. For example, while precedence exists for referring to the 'hand of God' or the 'finger of God' to describe the act of creation in the Septuagint, few writers before Theophilus and Irenaeus draw upon the image. More to the point, nearly all Christian writers prior to Theophilus refer to the Logos as an agent of creation, but no Christian writer includes the Spirit as a creator along with the Logos. Likewise, early Christians, following Paul, almost unanimously understood 'Sophia' as a title for the pre-existent Christ.⁴⁴ Only Theophilus identifies the pre-existent

41 Compare *Autol.* 2.18 and *Haer.* 4.20.1, among others. In chapter five, I will discuss the 'hands of God' image as a Trinitarian image. See below pp. 200–203, 213–16.

42 *Autol.* 1.7. *Haer.* 1.22.1, 3.8.3, *Epid.* 5. Although, as Briggman correctly observes, only with the third citation of the Ps. 33/2:6 does Irenaeus support a double agent theory of creation in the manner of *Autol.* 1.7. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 98–100.

43 Regarding the history of interpretation of this passage and the uniqueness of Theophilus' interpretation, see Bertrand de Margerie, "Insinuations trinitaires dans le Psaume 33 (32), 6 chez les pères de l'Eglise et notamment chez saint Basile," *Aug* 40, no. 1 (2000): 35–41.

44 Paul called Christ the "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). Justin called Christ the "Wisdom" of God as well, and he connected this figure to the personified, pre-existent Wisdom figure of Prov. 8 in *Dial.* 61.1, 3.

Sophia with the Holy Spirit,⁴⁵ thus distinguishing the Holy Spirit from the pre-existent Logos.⁴⁶ Irenaeus makes the same identification and in so doing, he departs from two of his most trusted sources, namely Paul and Justin. Given the authority that Irenaeus places on these figures, and tradition in general, it is unlikely that he would have developed the alternate Sophia-Spirit identification apart from a significant and trusted source. Theophilus' status as bishop of an ancient church (Paul's original church, no less) would have qualified him as a significant source in Irenaeus' mind.

There are several other parallels between the two writers' thought, including the idea that Adam and Eve were created as innocent children and the odd exegesis of Genesis 1 that understands *ἀρχή* as a reference to the Logos and his work in creation. Nevertheless, the former two parallels sufficiently support the growing scholarly consensus that Irenaeus knew and was influenced by Theophilus' works. Furthermore, Irenaeus' tendency to at times follow Theophilus in areas that go against the conclusions of Paul and Justin suggest that he is a trusted source. Therefore, as with Justin, we ought to assume that any divergence between them was intentional on the part of Irenaeus, and the reasons for the departure deserve attention.

His Opponents

A third influence on Irenaeus' thought, although of a different kind, involves the theological communities against which he wrote *Haer.* known collectively as 'Gnostics.' The first two books of *Haer.* in their entirety are devoted to the detailing and logical/rhetorical refutation of the various systems, beliefs, and practices of these 'Gnostic' sects that Irenaeus understands as deviating from the apostles' true teaching handed down by the church's *regula*. The level of detail Irenaeus employs suggests a personal encounter with these groups and/or their writings, as I will show presently. And while the 'Gnostics' did not affect his thought positively in the manner of Paul, Justin, and Theophilus, they did, as noted above, have an effect on the way he formed his arguments. As such, they may be considered influences. What follows is not a comprehensive account of 'Gnosticism,' which is a subject to itself. In my brief account, I am interested only in the aspects of 'Gnosticism' that bear on Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology.⁴⁷ Moreover, I am not interested in reconstructing 'Gnostic' beliefs

45 *Autol.* 2.10, 2.17.

46 Theophilus is not always consistent in this identification (e.g., *Autol.* 2.22), and I will explore some of these inconsistencies in chapter four below.

47 In my study of 'Gnosticism,' I have found most helpful the works by Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990),

from the texts found at Nag Hammadi and assessing Irenaeus' accuracy in reporting. Michel Desjardins has called into question this method of ascertaining the accuracy of Irenaeus' reports, and I am in agreement with him that no *a priori* reason exists for assuming the documents of Nag Hammadi are more accurate in recounting Valentinianism than Irenaeus' writings.⁴⁸ Even if this comparative exercise offers meaning, such meaning is ancillary to my thesis. Irenaeus formulated his arguments and his theology to meet the challenges of 'Gnostic' theology *as he perceived them*. As such, my thesis depends only on Irenaeus' perceptions of their teaching.

The primary 'Gnostic' sect or school to which Irenaeus devotes his polemic, as indicated both by the preface of *Haer.* 1 and the text of *Haer.* 2, is Valentinianism, including the schools following Ptolemaeus, Secundus, Marcus, and other unnamed masters.⁴⁹ Irenaeus notes that he acquired commentaries from some of these teachers and also that he had personal conversations with them.⁵⁰ These conversations likely would have happened during his stay at Rome for Irenaeus elsewhere reports that Valentinus taught in Rome throughout the bishoprics of Hyginus, Pius, and Anicetus, at least from 140 to 155 C.E.⁵¹ While Rome was certainly the epicenter of the movement, there is evidence of a 'Gnostic' presence in Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Syria as well.

Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), Alastair H.B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996), Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), and the various articles in Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, eds., *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

48 Desjardins, "The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A Question of Methodology," *VC* 40 (1986): 342–47.

49 Irenaeus also addresses several other schools that lack much common emphases with those of the Valentinians. Regarding the relationship of these alternate sects to Valentinus, I am persuaded by Joel Kalvesmaki's lucid reading of *Haer.* 1 in Kalvesmaki, "The Original Sequence of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1: Another Suggestion," *J ECS* 15:3 (2007): 407–17. Kalvesmaki posits two separate lines of school successions, first those schools following Valentinus and occupying the majority of *Haer.* 1.1.1–1.21.5, and second those schools following Simon and occupying *Haer.* 1.22.1–1.30.2. The elements of 'Gnosticism' that have a bearing on his Trinitarian theology are all found in the Valentinian varieties.

50 *Haer.* 1. *Pref.*2. Of these schools, Irenaeus is most concerned to dispute the teaching of the Ptolemaean Valentinians. Despite the multiplicity of Valentinian schools outlined in *Haer.* 1, the content detailing Ptolemaean Valentinianism (*Haer.* 1.1–9) takes a central place in his polemic of *Haer.* 2.

51 *Haer.* 3.3.4. On the biography of Valentinus, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 417–22.

Although reasons for the emergence of the Valentinian ‘Gnostics’ and other similar ‘Gnostic’ groups, are unclear, by the end of the second century, they had attracted a large following of people, many of whom had once been members of what Irenaeus deems the true or universal church.⁵² For example, Irenaeus writes in one place that ‘Gnostics’ have “risen up just like mushrooms from the earth” indicating the great variety of schools as well as, perhaps, a broad geographical area in which they appeared.⁵³ Whether any sect of ‘Gnosticism’ had reached Irenaeus’ province of Gaul is debated. M.S. Enslin, for example, believed that “Gnosticism did not threaten the church in Gaul.”⁵⁴ Therefore, he could not explain Irenaeus’ interest in the question. Conversely, Mary Ann Donovan argues that until the time of Irenaeus, the ‘Gnostics’ had been a part of the community at Lyons. Her argument rests on the familiarity with which the ‘Gnostics’ handled Christian property, such as scripture. She writes, “Their familiarity with Scripture, the claim that they present themselves under false colors, the claim that they operate as wolves among the lambs, and the Irenaean concern for the impact of Valentinian interpretation on ‘the weak’ of the community suggest [their presence in the Church].”⁵⁵ In favor of the latter thesis, I note that Irenaeus reports that Marcus’ disciples are “in our own regions around the Rhone.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the fervor with which Irenaeus writes against these groups is strong circumstantial evidence that his own church was also being influenced by these ‘Gnostic’ schools. The evidence supports at least a minimal ‘Gnostic’ presence in Gaul.

Although scholars rightly emphasize the disparate nature of the different communities that have historically been lumped together under the

52 Irenaeus’ attribution of ‘Gnosticism’ to Simon Magus (*Haer.* 1.23.2) is polemical and likely apocryphal, but it raises the deeper issue of whether ‘Gnosticism’ predated Christianity or is a phenomenon of Christianity, alone. For a good summary of the various debates in scholarship over the beginnings of ‘Gnosticism,’ see the introduction to Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, xiii–xxi. For the better part of the twentieth century, the dominant opinion had been that ‘Gnosticism’ predated Christianity with roots in Jewish speculative thought. More recently, Logan has argued that ‘Gnosticism’ can be understood only as a uniquely Christian phenomenon. Fantino holds a similar thesis. Fantino, *Théologie d’Irénée*, 145–50.

53 *Haer.* 1.29.1. Many scholars posit that the rapid growth of the various ‘Gnostic’ schools stemmed from an active program of proselytizing on the part of the various sects. See, for example, Fantino, *Théologie d’Irénée*, 135.

54 Enslin, “Irenaeus,” 147.

55 Donovan, *One Right Reading: A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 32. More recently, Parvis notes the presence of ‘Gnostics’ in Gaul without further comment. Parvis, “Who Was Irenaeus?” in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 16.

56 *Haer.* 1.13.7.

title ‘Gnosticism,’ most have attempted to identify core principles that unite these otherwise distinct groups. Scholars commonly identify the cohesion of these groups in their shared emphasis on “saving knowledge.”⁵⁷ As Giovanni Filoramo observes, “In Gnostic vocabulary [*gnōsis*] has undergone a profound transformation. *Gnōsis* is now used in an absolute way to indicate a form of meta-rational knowledge, which is the gift of divinity and has in it the power to save the one who achieves it. It enables one to take possession of the keys to the cosmic mystery, to solve the enigma of the universe by absorbing the *axis mundi*, or world axis, of archaic cosmogonies into the very essence of one’s generation.”⁵⁸ This conclusion agrees with Irenaeus’ description of the Valentinians insofar as the content of that saving knowledge is precisely the intricate protology and cosmogony that stands at the heart of his exposition. Thus, as we will see, Irenaeus spends a disproportionate amount of space on countering Valentinian protology in *Haer.* 2 because it forms the very core of their system.⁵⁹ A few details of this protology are needed to prepare for my account of Irenaeus’ response and alternate understanding.

According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians believed in the existence of an eternal, perfect divine being or ‘Aeon.’ This Aeon, also called the First-Source, the First-Father, and the Abyss,⁶⁰ is described as “incomprehensible and invisible, eternal and unbegotten . . .”⁶¹ and is located in a certain place, namely, the “invisible and indescribable heights.” He exists in the beginning only with his Thought, also called Grace and Silence, a separate Aeon who either emanated from the First-Father or was somehow present with him in the beginning.⁶²

57 Grant, *Gnosticism*, 10.

58 Filoramo, *History of Gnosticism*, 39.

59 In favor of this summation of the unity of ‘Gnosticism’ is Thomassen’s compelling case for the soteriological myth of Sophia’s fall and subsequent restoration as common to all Valentinian schools. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 35.

60 *Haer.* 1.1.1. The Greek forms of these titles are: Προαρχή, Προπάτωρ, and Βυθός. The Greek fragment comes from Epiphanius’ *Panarion*, which provides the Greek for the first 11 chapters of *Haer.* 1. See Rousseau, SC 263:66–73. As with much of the technical language of the Valentinians, the Latin translator simply transliterated these titles into the Latin: *Proarche*, *Propater*, and *Bythos*. The practice of giving Aeons alternate names is common in Valentinianism, and Irenaeus often switches back and forth between the titles he uses. Moreover, many of the same titles are used for different Aeons resulting in occasional difficulties in deciphering exactly which Aeon Irenaeus is referring to at any given point in the exposition.

61 *Haer.* 1.1.1. The Greek forms of these descriptors are ἀχώρητος, ἀόρατος, αἰδιος, and ἀόρατος.

62 Irenaeus is unclear here. On the one hand, the First-Father exists alone before all other things and is the lone source of everything else, which would include his Thought.

The Greek forms of the titles for this second Aeon are feminine ("Ἐννοία, Χάρις, and Σιγή), which expresses the Valentinian belief that Aeons exist in male and female pairs and, more importantly, reflects a crucial aspect of the Valentinian theological method, namely, the use of human analogy to explain divine things. The Aeons exist in male and female pairs, presumably, because humans are born out of male and female pairs. Irenaeus' description of the generation of Mind, the only clear description of the emanation process in his account, expresses the link. He writes, "At one time this Profundity [*Bythos*] decided to emit from himself the Beginning of all things. This emission would be as a 'seed' which he decided to emit and deposit as it were in the womb of Silence, who coexisted with him. After she had received this 'seed' and had become pregnant, she gave birth to Mind."⁶³ I will return in a later chapter to the importance of the human analogy in the Valentinian scheme.

From the union of these two original Aeons, more Aeons emanated in male and female pairs, until a total of thirty existed together with the First Aeon in the *Pleroma* (Πλήρομα) or 'Fullness.'⁶⁴ These Aeons were personal, spiritual entities subsisting outside of, or distinct from, the First Aeon in a gradated or descending hierarchy of divine natures. The Aeons' lesser divine natures were the consequence of their respective emanations, both because the emanations occurred at progressively later points in time and because the emanations located the Aeons at progressively larger spatial increments from their source.⁶⁵ In other words, the later an Aeon emanated and the farther away from the source the Aeon was located, the lesser its quality of divinity. The effect of this

On the other hand, the Thought of the First-Father is described as his contemporary (συνυπαρχούση). The discrepancy likely emerges from the Valentinian belief that all Aeons are emanated out of a previous pair, making it difficult to posit that Thought was emanated by the First-Father alone. Still, the first two books of *Haer.* imply throughout that in the Valentinian systems, the First-Father is above and before all other things—everything ultimately flows from him. On this discrepancy, see François -M.-M. Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée*, Études de Philosophie Médiévale 36 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1947), 325–31.

63 *Haer.* 1.1.1, ACW 55:23.

64 Irenaeus' use of the word Πλήρομα is another example of the Latin translator transposing the Greek word into the Latin language. See Rousseau, SC 263:14–15. 'Fullness' in the Latin text appears most often as *Pleroma*. Occasionally the translator renders Πλήρομα with other words such as *Adimpletio*, *Plenitudo*, and *Pater*. Bruno Reynders, *Lexique comparé du texte grec et des versions latine, arménienne et syriaque de l' "Adversus haereses" de saint Irénée*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 141–42 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1954), 88.

65 *Haer.* 1.1.1, 2.1.4.

descending hierarchy of divine beings was the presence of a ‘filter’ between the First-Father and the material world that maintained his transcendence.⁶⁶ Therefore, space or topology is crucial to the Valentinian understanding of the divine transcendence.⁶⁷

The most important of these Aeons was the first generated from the *Bythos-Ennoea* pair, the Aeon alternately called Mind, Only-Begotten, and the Beginning of all things.⁶⁸ At one place, Irenaeus describes the Mind as “similar and equal to [the Father] who emitted him . . .”⁶⁹ Specifically, this Aeon is the Beginning of all other Aeons that constitute the divine Fullness. He is more distinguished in divinity than the rest of the Aeons precisely because he emanated prior to them and directly from the First-Father; as such, he is physically closest to his source. This proximity is important because it allows the Mind to contemplate the greatness of the First-Father, a privilege not given to the other Aeons. Irenaeus writes, “Mind alone enjoyed himself in contemplating Father and exulted in considering his immeasurable greatness. He was thinking of communicating Father’s greatness also to the rest of the Aeons, how vast and great he is, and that he is without beginning, immeasurable, and incapable of being seen. But at the will of Father, Silence restrained him, because she wished to get them all to have the mind and the desire to seek after their First-Father mentioned above.”⁷⁰ Therefore, the Valentinian First-Father is unknown, hidden, and transcendent *even* to the semi-divine spiritual beings. The Mind’s proximity to his source provides him the ability to contemplate the First-Father, in the same way that the distance of the other Aeons to their source precludes their contemplation. A spatial or topological understanding of the divine *Pleroma* provides the logic of this understanding.

The Aeons’ desire to contemplate the First-Father leads to the creation of the material world. Specifically, Sophia (Σοφία, Wisdom), the last Aeon to be

66 The image of ‘filter’ comes from Rousseau, and it is an effective description of this aspect of Valentinian thought. Rousseau, SC 293:122.

67 William R. Schoedel correctly underscored this spatial aspect of ‘Gnostic’ theology, and his account will factor large in chapter two. See his two articles that address much of the same material, namely, Schoedel, “Enclosing, Not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God” in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken, *Théologie Historique* 53 (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 75–86 and Schoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism” in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig*, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 88–108.

68 The Greek forms of these names are: Νοῦς, Μονογενής, and Ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων.

69 *Haer.* 1.1.1.

70 *Haer.* 1.2.1, ACW 55:25.

emitted, desired to contemplate the First-Father out of turn. As a result, she “fell into extreme agony because of the immense height and unsearchable nature of the Father . . .”⁷¹ and inadvertently created from herself a formless and evil passion. Sophia is restored to the *Pleroma* by an Aeon named Limit who is emitted after the original 29 Aeons. Limit restores Sophia by physically separating the unholy passion from her.⁷² Limit subsequently serves as the gate that prevents Sophia’s separated passion, called *Achamoth* (Hebrew for Wisdom), from entry into the *Pleroma*.⁷³ Material creation ultimately stems from this separated and unintended passion. Irenaeus writes, “This [emotion], they say, became the origin and substance from which this world was constituted.”⁷⁴ Thus, the Valentinians understood material creation not as the First-Father’s good gift and intention but as an unintended abortion or mistake, the result of a passion barred from the presence of the First-Father and physically separated from him by a series of Aeons.⁷⁵ The Valentinians

71 *Haer.* 1.2.2, ACW 55:25. I use feminine pronouns to refer to the Valentinian Sophia because she is the female Aeon of her pair. When I refer to the Apologists’ and Irenaeus’ use of ‘Sophia’ to refer to the Son and Spirit respectively, I will use male pronouns in conformity with traditional language used of God. Nevertheless, the Apologists and Irenaeus do not draw any significance for the gender of divine entities with their titles in the manner of the Valentinians.

72 *Haer.* 1.2.4.

73 *Haer.* 1.2.2, 4. Limit also is called Stake, Redeemer, Reaper, Limiter, and Restorer. The titles convey a somewhat contradictory, double meaning of an agent who restores or saves and an agent who fences off or keeps out. This contradiction can be explained by Limit’s role as redeemer in regard to Sophia but gatekeeper in regard to *Achamoth*. Limit is one of four Aeons emitted after the fall of Sophia and, as a result, exists outside the *Pleroma*, although not as a result of passion, as is the case with Sophia prior to her restoration. The other three are Christ, Holy Spirit, and Savior. Christ and Holy Spirit are two Aeons emitted “for the stability and support of the Fullness.” *Haer.* 1.2.5. They reveal to the Aeons the knowledge of the First-Father so that none of them will repeat Sophia’s mistake. Nevertheless, the content of the knowledge does not reveal the First-Father’s nature, which the Valentinians consider unknowable. The Aeons only learn from Christ and the Holy Spirit that “[the First-Father] is immeasurable and incomprehensible, and that he cannot be seen or heard.” *Haer.* 1.2.5. The only thing that can be comprehended of him is his Only-Begotten, that is, the third Aeon called ‘Mind.’ The Holy Spirit taught the Aeons to appreciate where they were in the creation and not to pursue more knowledge in the manner of Sophia. The Savior, last to be emitted, is the result of this teaching. He is emitted from the best and most beautiful part of all of the Aeons in gratitude to the First-Father.

74 *Haer.* 1.4.2, ACW 55:31.

75 *Haer.* 1.2.3, 1.4.1.

attribute the material creation to a second god, called the ‘Demiurge,’ who is ignorant of the First-Father. The further, somewhat convoluted features of this account of creation, which Irenaeus explores in some detail, need not concern us.⁷⁶ What is important to note, again, is that spatial imagery provides the logic for this account. Sophia, already positioned at a distance from the First-Father as a result of the lateness of her emanation, falls from the heights in which the *Pleroma* is located into a place below the *Pleroma*. This place then becomes the place of material creation, which, in part as a result of its spatial distance from the First-Father, is inherently evil and unredeemable.

The Valentinians identify the ignorant, Demiurgic God with the God of the Jews and the God revealed in the Septuagint or the Jewish scriptures. As such, the Demiurge is not the God revealed by Jesus Christ in the early Christian writings and teachings passed down by the apostles. The God revealed by Jesus, and thus the Most High God, rather, is the First-Father or the First Aeon. Thus, the Jewish scriptures are rejected or allegorized to the point of irrelevancy. Furthermore, the division in the Godhead is the basis of the radical dualism of the Valentinian system, which Irenaeus deems its primary error. This division is the focus of his rhetorical response in *Haer.* 2 and the basis for his own exposition of the unity of God, which has a bearing on his Trinitarian theology.

This last aspect of Valentinian theology is held in common with the theology of another influential figure in Irenaeus’ thought, namely, Marcion. Like Valentinus, Marcion, a wealthy ship owner from Sinope, also has connections to Rome where Irenaeus likely encountered his teachings. Tertullian reports that Marcion came to Rome around 140 C.E.⁷⁷ After an initial embrace by the church, perhaps as the result of a large donation, his unique understanding of Christianity became suspect among the leadership. In 144 C.E., he broke from the church and established a rival community in Rome based on his understandings of ‘authentic’ Christianity. This rival community, like the various ‘Gnostic’ communities, attracted members of the church in Rome and other provinces. Justin, writing around a decade after Marcion broke from the church at Rome, reports that he was still alive and that his teaching had “caused many of every race of men and women to speak blasphemies and to deny that God is the Maker of this universe . . .”⁷⁸ Allowing for hyperbole, the statement demonstrates the popularity Marcion’s beliefs must have had.

⁷⁶ *Haer.* 1.4.1, 5–1.5.1.

⁷⁷ Tertullian, *Praescr.*, 30. For Marcion’s biography, see Heikki Räisänen, “Marcion,” in Marjanen and Luomanen, *Christian “Heretics,”* 100–124.

⁷⁸ 1 *Apol.* 26 in *St. Justin Martyr, The First and Second Apologies*, trans., intro., and notes Barnard, ACW 56 (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 41. Subsequent references to this trans-

Still, Irenaeus' inclusion of Marcion with the 'Gnostics' is odd given the degree to which Marcion's beliefs differed from those of the Valentinians and other variations of 'Gnosticism.' Significantly, his works lack both an intricate protological account and the extreme allegorizing project of the Valentinians. In his still unsurpassed historical survey, Adolf von Harnack consistently emphasizes Marcion's simplicity and efforts to simplify Christianity, in contrast to the intricate protology and mythical elements of 'Gnosticism.'⁷⁹ And Marcion's original work *Antitheses* specifically rejects allegory as a method of ameliorating contradictions between those texts later known as the Old and New Testaments; indeed, the contradictions prove his point.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, despite these differences, Irenaeus is able to move seamlessly from the 'Gnostic' teachings to Marcion's teachings.

The reason for this inclusion is not, as some scholars have suggested, that Marcion himself is a 'Gnostic,' nor is it simply that Irenaeus was using source material in which the tenets of Cerdo and Marcion happened to be situated, but rather that Irenaeus' primary objection with Marcion and the Marcionites aligns with his primary objection against Valentinian theology. According to Irenaeus, both systems introduce a division into the Godhead and hold that the Creator is a different God than the God revealed by Jesus Christ:

[Marcion] uttered the impudent blasphemy that the God who was proclaimed by the law and the prophets was the author of evil, and desirous of war. He was inconsistent in his teaching and contradicted himself. Jesus, however, who has his origin in the Father who is above the God who made the world, came to Judaea at the time when Pontius Pilate presided as procurator of Tiberius Caesar. He was manifested in the form of a man to those who were in Judaea. He abolished the prophets and the law and all the works of the God who made the world . . .⁸¹

lation of *Apologies* will be marked in the footnotes with ACW 56 followed by the page number.

79 Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 12–14, 21–24, 53–67.

80 Marcion's *Antitheses* was written to demonstrate "the irreconcilability of the Old Testament with the gospel and its origins from a different God . . ." Harnack, *Marcion*, 17. As such, the *Antitheses* likely functioned as a *regula* of sorts intended to help Marcion's followers rightly interpret his truncated canon (the Gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul) against the manner in which other Christians were reading. Irenaeus addresses Marcion's insufficient and edited canon in several places. *Haer.* 1.27.2, 3.11.7, 9, 14.4.

81 *Haer.* 1.27.2, ACW 55:91.

This programmatic description is an apt summary of the doctrine that will be the focus of Irenaeus' refutation in *Haer.* 2, and it contains a number of convergences with Irenaeus' descriptions of the Valentinians to this point. First, the God who creates this world is evil. Although not spelled out in the description of Marcion's beliefs, this belief clearly implies that the creation itself is evil. Second, Jesus came not from this creator god but from the higher "Father who is above the God who made the world." The work of Christ, then, ultimately reveals a previously unknown or hidden Father and renders the Jewish scriptures meaningless. Although Irenaeus likely was not ignorant of the differences between the various sects of his opponents—the 'Gnostics' and the Marcionites in particular—he does not focus on these differences for polemical purposes. His focus is always on the errors they share in common, none more important than the division in the Godhead.⁸²

Although I will argue that Irenaeus departs from the Apologists in certain areas, the nature of his opponents' influence upon Irenaeus should be distinguished from that of Justin and Theophilus. Justin and Theophilus' influence upon Irenaeus still may be regarded as positive, insofar as their understanding of the faith and their interpretations of scripture are reflected and passed on in Irenaeus' thought. Conversely, the tenets of his opponents influence Irenaeus' thought only insofar as they lead him to emphasize certain truths about God he might not have emphasized, or at least might have emphasized in a different manner, had he not encountered these schools of thought.

Nonetheless, past scholarship has not acknowledged sufficiently the large amount of convergence between Irenaeus' opponents and the Apologists, specifically in those areas that have a bearing on Trinitarian theology. It is surely the case, given his acumen, that Irenaeus recognized these convergences. He avoided highlighting them, however, due to his respect for the Apologists, and Justin in particular, as authentic witnesses to the teaching of the apostles.⁸³ Still, his rejection of these aspects of the theology of his opponents, notably the Valentinians, was a *de facto* rejection of the same tendencies present in the Apologists' theology and offers the best evidence of the progression in

82 In my treatment of Irenaeus' polemic, I will not give space to deciphering whether Irenaeus is engaged in a specific polemic against Valentinian doctrine or Marcionite doctrine, but, following Irenaeus' intention, assume that they are the same.

83 The fact that Irenaeus does not mention Theophilus by name suggests that he is not as concerned to preserve him as a faithful witness. Although his silence either way indicates also that he does not lump Theophilus in with a lapsed figure such as Tatian. It may have been Theophilus' role as bishop that saved him on this count.

Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology from the dominant Christian thought prior to his writing.

Philosophy

A brief word needs to be said regarding Irenaeus' indebtedness to Greek philosophy, not so much because these thought forms and methods of argumentation factor predominately in Irenaeus' thought, but because Irenaeus' posture toward Greek philosophy offers an important area of contrast to the Apologists, which will resurface continually in this study. On the surface, Irenaeus' assessment of philosophy is quite negative. In the course of his early argument against Valentinianism, he writes, "[The Valentinians] are exposed not only as proposing as their own what the comic poets staged, but as gathering together whatever has been uttered by those who are ignorant of God and who are called philosophers. They sew these together into a kind of cento out of many and worst rags, and so, by a subtle style, they prepare for themselves a fictitious cloak."⁸⁴ Following this statement, Irenaeus refers to the beliefs of a number of different Greek philosophers, which he alleges are part of the 'Gnostic' system dressed up in different language. With one possible exception, every citation or use of a philosopher in *Haer.* makes the same negative point.⁸⁵

84 *Haer.* 2.14.2, ACW 65:48.

85 *Haer.* 2.14 is by far Irenaeus' most concentrated use of Greek philosophy. Benoît reports that of 35 references to Greek philosophers and beliefs in *Haer.*, 25 occur in *Haer.* 2 and 19 occur in this passage alone. Benoît, *Saint Irénée*, 65–66. The possible exception to the negative use of philosophy comes in *Haer.* 3.25.5 where Irenaeus cites Plato against Marcion. Irenaeus writes, "Plato is shown to be more religious than these men, since he acknowledged that the one and the same God is both just and good and has power over all things, and even exercises judicial power. Thus, he said . . ." *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, Book 3, trans. Unger, intro. and rev. Irenaeus M.C. Steenberg, ACW 64 (New York: Newman Press, 2012), 113. (Subsequent references to this translation of *Haer.* 3 will be marked in the footnotes with ACW 64 followed by the page number.) What follows is a quote from *Laws* 4.715e. This is a change from *Haer.* 2 where Plato falls in the litany of philosophers from whom the 'Gnostics' took their heretical ideas (*Haer.* 2.14.3–4). However, I disagree with Benoît that this discrepancy is evidence of a manifest change of heart regarding Plato between the writing of *Haer.* 2 and 3. Benoît, *Saint Irénée*, 71. Rather, it is precisely because Irenaeus maintains a negative view of Plato that the statement in *Haer.* 3.25.5 is so forceful. In effect, Irenaeus is saying that even as heretical as Plato is, he is still closer to the truth about God than Marcion. Such an argument only shows the degree of apostasy into which Marcion has fallen; it by no means endorses Plato as a positive source for theology. I address this point in more detail below, pp. 77–78.

Earlier scholarship took Irenaeus at his word and largely left the question of the influence of philosophy or Greek culture out of discussions of his work.⁸⁶ More recent scholarship has softened this position, concluding that Irenaeus is not entirely ignorant of the tools of Greek culture, including philosophy.⁸⁷ He seems to have been as capable as others of using philosophical source books, as indicated in the content of *Haer.* 2.14 addressed above. Moreover, as I will show momentarily, Irenaeus is not concerned, as are the Apologists, to identify convergences between Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy. Conversely, to show the convergences between his opponents and Greek philosophy proved an effective rhetorical tool for discounting the validity of his opponents' beliefs.⁸⁸ Therefore, to conclude based on the lack of philosophical examples and logic that Irenaeus necessarily has little or no knowledge of philosophy fails to consider his occasion for writing. Perhaps the most that I can conclude at this point is that Irenaeus' biography does not indicate a period of formal philosophical training, an observation manifested in his writings. Nevertheless, the difficulties he perceives with his opponents' theology were often the same difficulties resulting from an unthinking combination of the tenets of Greek philosophy and the God of scripture. As such, Irenaeus' failure to engage philosophy on a large scale might not be the result of ignorance but of understanding—Irenaeus does not utilize Greek philosophy to the degree of the Apologists because he has understood better than them

86 For example, Audet, "Orientations Théologiques" and Enslin, "Irenaeus," two otherwise comprehensive studies on Irenaeus' life, do not address the question. Notable exceptions include Grant, "Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture," *HTR* 42, no. 1 (1949): 41–51, and Grant, *Irenaeus*, 41–53 and the several essays on Irenaeus in E.P. Meijering, *God Being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975).

87 See, most recently, Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 89–91.

88 As opposed to conclusions on Irenaeus' philosophical abilities, there has long been consensus that Irenaeus is a trained and effective rhetorician. See, for example, Benoît, *Saint Irénée*, 55–73, Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 357–64, Thomas C.K. Ferguson, "The Rule of Truth and Irenaeus' Rhetoric in Book 1 of *Against Heresies*," *VC* 55 (2001): 356–75, Sagnard, *Gnose valentinienne*, 70–77, and Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus," *VC* 13 (1959), 22–32. Various rhetorical devices identified by these scholars that are present in *Haer.* 1–2 include the dilemma (*Haer.* 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.5.3, 2.12.6), irony or parody (*Haer.* 1.11.4, 1.5.4–5), and the question (*Haer.* 2.6.1, 2.13.5). Irenaeus' use of rhetoric does not factor significantly into my treatment except where I note generally that *Haer.* 2 is more of a logical/rhetorical refutation of Valentinianism than a scriptural one. In making this claim, I assume the conclusions of these studies regarding Irenaeus' abilities in rhetoric.

the contradictions with scripture that such definitions inevitably produce.⁸⁹ This level of understanding would not presuppose a formal Greek education but could be gained by serious study of the philosophical source books available to him.⁹⁰

This list of influences is not exhaustive. Other scholars have underscored the importance of such influences upon Irenaeus as rhetoric, Homer, Second Temple Judaism, and other various forms of Jewish thought. I do not discount these influences upon Irenaeus or their importance to his theology in general, but for the purposes of this work, they are of secondary importance and, as such, do not need to be addressed in any detail here. I will, however, engage them where appropriate in the following chapters.

Irenaeus' Occasion for Writing

As noted above, Irenaeus believed that the various 'Gnostic' theological systems were not faithful expressions of the teaching handed down from the apostles. Moreover, he considered these communities dangerous because they were proselytizing actively and leading believers away from the true church descended from the apostles. Irenaeus begins *Haer.* by stating this problem. He writes, "Certain people are discarding the Truth and introducing deceitful myths and endless genealogies, which, as the Apostle says, promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith. By specious argumentation, craftily patched together, they mislead the minds of the more ignorant . . . By cleverness with words they persuasively allure the simple folk to this style of searching, but then, absurdly, bring them to perdition by trumping up their blasphemous and impious opinion against the Creator."⁹¹ Irenaeus determines to write against the 'Gnostics' in his capacity as bishop in succession from the apostles, in order to save the people belonging to the true church from falling into error and forfeiting their salvation in Christ.

According to Irenaeus, the 'Gnostics' attracted so many people because they did not present their beliefs as dissimilar from those of the church. They were persuasive in this endeavor first because they were deceptive about their intricate beliefs. He writes, "Error, in fact, does not show its true self, lest on being stripped naked it should be detected. Instead, it craftily decks itself out

89 I will argue this point below in relation to Irenaeus' understanding of divine transcendence. See below pp. 78–83.

90 See Meijering, "Irenaeus' Relation to Philosophy in the Light of His Concept of Free Will," in *God Being History*, 19–30.

91 *Haer.* 1. Pref. 1, ACW 55:21. Here and elsewhere, I have removed Unger's italics marking scriptural allusions.

in an attractive dress, and thus, by an outward false appearance, presents itself to the more ignorant, as truer than Truth itself, ridiculous as it is to even say this.”⁹² Second, they used the church’s materials and outer dressings to ground their alternate doctrine. Thus, they read the scriptures and taught from the scriptures. They gave their Aeons scriptural titles. They believed in a person called Christ who was the agent of human salvation. They even believed in a historical story of salvation.⁹³ Nonetheless, their understandings of these doctrinal components bore no relation to the teachings handed down by the apostles and held in the church’s *regula fidei*. In a well-known statement, previously quoted in part, Irenaeus summarizes their error:

They try to adapt to their own sayings in a manner worthy of credence, either the Lord’s parables, or the prophets’ saying, or the apostles’ words, so that their fabrication might not appear to be without witness. They disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures and, as much as in them lies, they disjoint the members of the Truth. They transfer passages and rearrange them; and, making one thing out of another, they deceive many by the badly composed phantasy of the Lord’s words that they adapt. By way of illustration, suppose someone would take the beautiful image of a king, carefully made out of precious stones by a skillful artist, and would destroy the features of the man on it and change around and rearrange the jewels, and make the form of a dog, or of a fox, out of them . . . And suppose he would through this fanciful arrangement of the jewels deceive the inexperienced who had no idea of what the king’s picture looked like, and would persuade them that this base picture of a fox is that beautiful image of the king.⁹⁴

Elsewhere, he says more simply, “[T]hey speak the same language as we do, but intend different meanings.”⁹⁵ Therefore, the challenge posed by ‘Gnosticism’ demanded that Irenaeus carefully distinguish the true beliefs and scriptural interpretations possessed by the church’s *regula* from the false beliefs and scriptural interpretations proffered by his opponents.

Irenaeus accomplishes his task in two related ways: (1) he exposes the doctrines and variant scriptural interpretations of the various ‘Gnostic’

⁹² *Haer.* 1. *Pref.* 2, ACW 55:21.

⁹³ Fantino believes that Irenaeus’ precedent for his notion of *οἰκονομία*, or the economy of salvation, is found in ‘Gnostic’ theology. Fantino, *Théologie d’Irénée*, esp. 98–106.

⁹⁴ *Haer.* 1.8.1, ACW 55:41.

⁹⁵ *Haer.* 1. *Pref.* 2, ACW 55:21.

communities, a task, he claims, never accomplished before;⁹⁶ and (2) he presents the true faith, the true understanding of Jesus' message in scripture as passed down in the church from the apostles and contained in the scriptures as read through the church's *regula*. The first task dominates *Haer.* 1 and 2. In *Haer.* 1, Irenaeus carefully describes the various doctrines of multiple 'Gnostic' communities, which, as noted previously, he claims to have learned through personal interaction with followers of Valentinus and through reading their commentaries on scripture. Although Irenaeus believes the mere exposure of the 'Gnostic' secret doctrines will show their error,⁹⁷ in *Haer.* 2, he engages in a logical and rhetorical argument to aid his readers in seeing the internal inconsistencies of the 'Gnostic' systems. Irenaeus does not turn to an argument from scripture in full until *Haer.* 3 because his opponents also used scripture to ground their beliefs. As such, his opponents first had to be exposed and then refuted by the principles of reason such that scripture could be freed for a fresh reading according to the church's *regula*. Although Irenaeus does not refrain from quoting scripture and the church's *regula* in places in *Haer.* 1–2, his intent is not to argue from scripture in these works.

In *Haer.* 3–5 and *Epid.*, Irenaeus' focus is the second, more positive aspect of presenting the true faith passed down from the apostles. This task is required because the 'Gnostics' had so badly interpreted scripture that, to use Irenaeus' metaphor, people could no longer recognize the good picture of the king.⁹⁸ In the preface of the *Epid.*, Irenaeus writes, "We are sending you, as it were, a summary memorandum, so that you may find much in a little, and by means of this small [work] understand all the members of the body of the truth, and through a summary receive the exposition of the things of God so that, in this way, it will bear your own salvation like fruit..."⁹⁹ In these latter books, Irenaeus turns to his proofs from scripture read through the church's *regula*, ostensibly arguing first from the teachings of the apostles (*Haer.* 3), second from Christ's parables (*Haer.* 4), and finally from Christ's words (*Haer.* 5).¹⁰⁰

The unifying feature of the different strategies and tools of the two tasks (rhetoric/logic and scripture/*regula*, respectively) is Irenaeus' constant object

96 *Haer.* 1. Pref. 2.

97 *Haer.* 1.31.4.

98 *Haer.* 1.8.1, quoted above p. 42.

99 *Epid.* 1 in *St. Irenaeus of Lyons On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. and intro. John Behr (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 39. Subsequent references to this translation of *Epid.* will be marked in the footnotes with Behr followed by the page number.

100 Irenaeus describes this breakdown in the preface of *Haer.* 5, although the content of each book does not stay within the parameters of the specified portions of scripture.

to *distinguish* the true faith from that of his opponents. The last three books of *Haer.* in their entirety, as summarized in the *Epid.*, present the true content of the church's faith. This faith is manifested largely through an extended exegesis of the scriptures as read through the *regula fidei* demonstrating the unity of the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus Christ and the subsequent unity of creation and redemption. With the exception of *Haer.* 2, then, Irenaeus primarily relies upon the language of the church—the scriptures and the *regula*—to discount his opponents' doctrines.

Apologists

Lives

Of the three apologists addressed in this study, only Justin provides any information about his life. In the opening of 1 *Apol.*, Justin notes that he is from Flavia Neapolis in Syria-Palestine, making him a Samaritan by birth. Although he refers to himself once as a Samaritan,¹⁰¹ nothing in his works suggests a familiarity with Samaritan religion.¹⁰² Indeed, everything about Justin suggests a thoroughly Hellenized figure.¹⁰³ Although his name is Latin, the name of his grandfather, Bacchius, is Greek.¹⁰⁴ In the *Dial.*, Justin suggests that he is uncircumcised.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in relating an account of his conversion to Trypho, he includes details of what is arguably a formal Greek education. Justin reports that he studied under several masters from various philosophical schools including the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans, and the Platonists, with whom he remained the longest.¹⁰⁶ Although this description is likely a stylized trope rather than an historical account, Justin's works suggest a kernel of truth in this story, particularly his long stay with the Platonists. The scholarly consensus, in any case, maintains that Justin received some formal philosophical training, even if not as thorough as the *Dial.* account implies.¹⁰⁷ His conversion to Christianity subsequently came about through the witness of a

101 *Dial.* 120.6.

102 See Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 5. Additionally, Munier notes that Justin appears to know neither Hebrew nor Armenian. Munier, *Justin*, 12.

103 By 'Hellenized,' I mean one who has been brought up in a Greek world and is familiar with the customs, values, and philosophies of the Greeks.

104 Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 5.

105 *Dial.* 29.1.

106 *Dial.* 2.

107 See, for example, Carl Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," *ZNTW* 44 (1952–3): 157–95 and Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 8.

venerable old Christian who urged Justin to search for truth in the prophets.¹⁰⁸ This stylized account roughly corresponds to the shorter account of his conversion in 2 *Apol.* 12, where Justin states that while a Platonist, he was drawn to Christianity because of the courage he had witnessed in Christians facing persecution, torture, and death. These similarities, along with the content of his writing, which demonstrates familiarity with Greek philosophy, suggests that Justin converted to Christianity after significant exposure to Greek philosophy, likely of the Middle Platonist variety (perhaps the ‘Platonists’ he names in the *Dial.* account).¹⁰⁹ Due to Trypho’s self-identification as a refugee of the recent war, scholars traditionally date Justin’s conversion to Christianity sometime prior to the Bar-Kochba revolt of 132 C.E.¹¹⁰

Likely as a result of his pre-Christian experiences, Justin has a much more positive view of Greek philosophy than Irenaeus. Indeed, philosophy for Justin is a source of truth that, when used rightly, leads a person to God. He writes, “Philosophy is indeed one’s greatest possession, and is most precious in the sight of God, to whom it alone leads and to whom it alone leads us, and in truth they who have applied themselves to philosophy are holy men.”¹¹¹ Before Christ, philosophy was the path to God for the pagans in the same way that the scriptures were for the Jews. The greatest example of this potential of philosophy was Socrates, whom Justin reports was a Christian even though he had been thought to be an atheist.¹¹²

As noted previously, Justin is in Rome sometime after 147 C.E. The *Acta* states that he was in Rome at two different periods in his life, although it is unclear whether he leaves Rome after 147 C.E. or whether he was in Rome as a youth prior to his final arrival and residence. The influence his works have on Irenaeus, Tatian, Athenagoras, and possibly others suggests Justin formed a group of disciples around him—the *Acta* has Justin martyred along with six others who might have been his current disciples.¹¹³ He is martyred sometime

¹⁰⁸ *Dial.* 7.1.

¹⁰⁹ Specific examples and evidence of this exposure will come in the body of this study.

¹¹⁰ *Dial.* 1.3. See also *Dial.* 9.3, 16.3, 40.2.

¹¹¹ *Dial.* 2.1 in *St. Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. and intro. Thomas P. Halton, ed. Michael Slusser, FC 3 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 5. Subsequent references to this translation of *Dial.* will be marked in the footnotes with FC 3 followed by the page number.

¹¹² 2 *Apol.* 10.

¹¹³ Barnard’s statement that he “founded his school of philosophical instruction” goes beyond the evidence. Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 13. Munier’s modest assessment is more accurate. He notes that Justin “presents himself as a man of dialogue [who] addresses himself not only to neophytes and experienced Christians, but also to Jews who accept a debate with

during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, perhaps due to a confrontation with the Cynic philosopher Crescens to whom Justin refers in 2 *Apol* 3.¹¹⁴ Although according to Eusebius, Justin wrote a number of different treatises, only three authentic works are extant, namely the two *Apologies* and the *Dial*.¹¹⁵

Almost nothing is known of the life of Athenagoras. Eusebius does not mention him in his history, nor does Jerome in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*. Not until the fourth century is Athenagoras' *Leg.* cited and attributed to the Athenian Apologist.¹¹⁶ The first Christian historian to mention Athenagoras and to provide some details on his life is Philip of Side, a fifth century Constantinopolitan deacon. Unfortunately, Philip's *Christian History* survives only in fragments¹¹⁷ and generally has been regarded as unreliable. For example, the historian Socrates writes, "[Philip] has grouped together in [his history] (an) abundance of very heterogeneous materials, wishing to show that he is not ignorant of philosophical and scientific learning. . . . By forcing such irrelevant details into connection with his subject, he has rendered his work a very loose production, useless alike, in my opinion, to the ignorant and the learned. . . . he has confounded the chronological order of the transactions he describes. . . ."¹¹⁸ This questionable reputation is confirmed by some discrepancies between his account and the text of the *Leg.* For example, Philip states that Athenagoras lived in the time of Hadrian and Antoninus, but Athenagoras addressed his *Leg.* to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. Philip also locates him in Alexandria as Clement's predecessor at the catechetical school. The chronology of Alexandrian teachers Philip provides—Athenagoras, Clement, Pantaenus—contradicts the Eusebian order of Pantaenus, Clement, Origen.¹¹⁹ The mediocre

him on the Scriptures, and to Pagans, interested by the Christian phenomenon." Munier, *Justin*, 17.

114 The approximate date of Justin's martyrdom is figured from the *Acta*, which names the presiding Roman prefect Rusticus. Rusticus became prefect of Rome in 162/163 C.E. See Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 74.

115 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.18. The debate over whether the *Apologies* were originally one document need not concern the present work.

116 Methodius, *On the Resurrection of the Soul*, 37.1.

117 According to Barnard, the Athenagoran fragment is preserved by a late Greek historian, possibly Nicephorus Callistus. Barnard provides a helpful English translation of the fragment in his *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic*, *Théologie Historique* 18 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 13–14.

118 Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.27, trans. A.C. Zenos, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, 1890, repr. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 2:168.

119 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.6.

reputation of Philip along with the silence of Eusebius leads most scholars to conclude that Athenagoras' connection to Alexandria is doubtful.¹²⁰

More reliable is the brief biographical material located in the heading of the *Leg.* and its first line, which together read, "Athenagoras of Athens, Christian Philosopher, A Plea on Behalf of the Christians to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and, above all, philosophers."¹²¹ Most scholars accept this as the more accurate account, meaning that Athenagoras hailed from Athens and that he wrote sometime during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 C.E.).¹²² More importantly, the heading identifies him as a 'Christian philosopher,' indicating that, like Justin, Athenagoras was familiar with, and perhaps studied, Greek philosophy.¹²³ The Athens setting would have provided him access to this formal training. Although the physical Academy was destroyed in the siege of Athens during the Mithridatic War (89–84 B.C.E.), evidence suggests that philosophical learning continued in the city.¹²⁴ As with Justin, Athenagoras' works suggest a formal training in philosophy as well as a positive understanding of its function.¹²⁵ He begins the *Leg.* with a specific appeal to his addressees Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, not to their power

120 See Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 14–15 and Pouderon, *Athénagore d'Athènes: Philosophe Chrétien* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989), 20–35.

121 *Leg.* 1. The heading is not a part of the text proper of the *Leg.* but is provided by the most ancient manuscript, namely, *Parisinus Graecus* 451 dating to 914 C.E. Pouderon, SC 379:37–39.

122 Grant specifically sets the writing of *Leg.* between 176 C.E. and 179 C.E., noting that similar titles for the emperors as victors over the Armenians and Sarmatians occur in Egyptian papyri dated to this three year period. Moreover, not until 176 C.E. was Commodus recognized as co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius, making Athenagoras' inscription inaccurate prior to that year. Grant further notes that this time period coincides with Marcus Aurelius' imperial tour where he was accompanied by his son Commodus. During the trip, he likely would have visited Athens, providing the remote possibility that Athenagoras could have presented his *Leg.* to the emperors. Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 80, 100.

123 The one detail in Philip's account that aligns with the witness of *Leg.* is his note that Athenagoras was a philosopher who began studying the scriptures in order to debate Christians but in the process was converted to the faith.

124 Dillon asserts that Athens returns as the center of philosophy in the first century C.E. with the appearance of Ammonius, the teacher of Plutarch. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 184ff. Middle Platonism continues after Plutarch through Taurus and Atticus, the latter of whom is contemporary to Athenagoras. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 233ff.

125 See Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 105–9. Abraham J. Malherbe argues that the structure of *Leg.* is the product of a writer with a formal education as it follows the same tripartite structure—physics, ethics, and logic—of many Middle Platonic writings, most notably,

or even to their high status as emperors, but to their roles as philosophers. He writes, “To the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and, above all, philosophers [τὸ δὲ μέγιστον φιλοσόφοις].”¹²⁶ More to the point, Athenagoras, more than any of the Apologists, finds precedent for all Christian beliefs in the Greek poets and philosophers. Unfortunately, little is known of his activities other than his writings. There are two extant works by Athenagoras, namely, *Leg.* and *On the Resurrection of the Dead*. Since scholarship is divided regarding the authenticity of the latter work, I will consider only *Leg.*¹²⁷

Theophilus differs from the other two Apologists in this study due to his role as bishop and his qualification “to speak in some sort of an official manner, in the name of the catholic Church.”¹²⁸ He is known to Eusebius only in this capacity; Eusebius locates Theophilus’ episcopate from 169–77 C.E.¹²⁹ While the 169 C.E. date may be accurate, Theophilus’ bishopric likely extended beyond 180 C.E., given the mention of Marcus Aurelius’ death (180 C.E.) in *Autol.* 3.27–28.¹³⁰

Theophilus’ account of his conversion suggest that he was an adult convert, for he states he was convinced of the existence of the Christian God through reading the Jewish scriptures, particularly the prophets.¹³¹ This suggests Theophilus was in a place where the Jewish scriptures would have been readily available, and Antioch, where he spent the last years of his life, is as good

the *Didask.* Malherbe, “The Structure of Athenagoras, ‘Supplicatio Pro Christianis.’” *vc* 23 (1969): 1–20.

126 *Leg.* 1. See also *Leg.* 6.

127 The difficulty with the treatise *On the Resurrection of the Dead* is the absence of external evidence supporting its Athenagoran authorship. This fact has led some notable scholars (e.g., Grant and Schoedel) to reject it as an Athenagoran work. Other scholars (e.g., Barnard, Malherbe, and Pouderon) accept its authenticity, noting the similarity in style of the two works. See Pouderon, *Philosophe Chrétien*, 62–114 for the various arguments for and against Athenagoran authorship.

128 Gustave Bardy, intro and notes, *Théophile d'Antioche: Trois livres à Autolycus*, SC 20 (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1948), 7.

129 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.20, 24. Eusebius reports that he is the sixth bishop of Antioch. The dates are figured from Eusebius’ *Chronicle*. See Bardy, SC 20: 8n2.

130 Grant speculates that Eusebius’ dates come from a statement in *Autol.* 1, where Theophilus compares Marcus Aurelius to God insofar as he alone is the sole emperor. Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 143. Grant notes that from 161–69 C.E., Marcus reigned with Lucius Verus, and from 177–80 C.E., he reigned with Commodus, leaving 169–77 C.E. as the only period where Marcus ruled alone and where this comparison would have been intelligible.

131 *Autol.* 1.14.

a conjecture as any for the setting of his early life.¹³² If so, he may have been led to Christianity, and subsequently influenced in his theology, through an encounter with the strong Jewish Christian population at Antioch. The Jewish presence in Antioch following the settlement rights accorded Jews by Seleucus I Nikator is well documented.¹³³ As often has been noted, Theophilus is the most 'Jewish' of the Apologists. In fact, there is little in his treatise that is specifically Christian. For example, he does not address the identity of Christ or christology in any significant degree, and he says nothing of the incarnation. Moreover, the whole of *Autol.* 2 is a *Hexaemeron*, an extended interpretation of the six days of creation in Genesis 1, similar to Philo's *On the Creation of the World*. Theophilus' only specific citation of a New Testament passage is John 1:1–3 in *Autol.* 2.22. Nevertheless, he does not quote this passage in connection to the incarnation, but in connection to the emergence of the Logos and his subsequent actions in creation. Moreover, *Autol.* 2.22 is the only occasion when Theophilus refers to the Logos with the specifically Christian appellation 'Son.' In the vast majority of references, Theophilus is content with the Hellenistic, or Philonic, appellation of 'Logos.'¹³⁴ Nevertheless, while the content of Theophilus' extant writings betrays a Jewish Christian influence, many scholars also have noted elements that reflect a formal Greek education, particularly in the area of rhetoric.¹³⁵ He also displays a particular affinity for Stoic thought, despite his overt criticism of their philosophy.¹³⁶

132 See *Autol.* 2.24, where, in his discussion of the original location of Eden, he remarks that the Tigris and Euphrates "border on our own regions."

133 Josephus, *Ant.* 12.119. See also Daniélou, *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 1, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. and ed. John Baker (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1964), 40–42, Grant, "Jewish Christianity at Antioch in the second century," *RSR* 60 (1972): 97–108, and more recently, David Ivan Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 81–82.

134 Grant, "The Problem of Theophilus," *HTR* 43, no. 3 (1950): 179–96. Theophilus does address resurrection in *Autol.* 1.13. Nonetheless, as J. Bentivegna underscores, he removes all traces of explicit Christianity from the discussion. Bentivegna, "A Christianity without Christ by Theophilus of Antioch," *SP* 13.2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975), 108–30.

135 D. Good, "Rhetoric and Wisdom in Theophilus of Antioch," *ATR* 73 (1991): 323–30 and Schoedel, "Theophilus of Antioch: Jewish Christian?" in *Studies in honor of Miroslav Marcovich*, ed. D. Sansone, Illinois Classical Studies 18 (Scholars Press, 1993), 279–97.

136 C. Curry, "The Theogony of Theophilus," *VC* 42 (1988): 318–26, K.E. McVey, "The Use of Stoic Cosmogony in Theophilus of Antioch's *Hexaemeron*," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karl Froelich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. M.S. Burrows and P. Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 32–58, and Rankin, *Clement to Origen*, 86. The positive estimation of Theophilus' understanding of philosophy

Unfortunately, we lack any information as to Theophilus' activities as bishop other than his writings. Eusebius reports that Theophilus wrote several works including three books to Autolycus, a work against Marcion, another work against Hermogenes, and several unnamed instructional books.¹³⁷ The collective letters to Autolycus is his only surviving work. Despite his episcopal status, the apologetic nature of these letters has linked Theophilus more with the apologists than with Irenaeus in the judgment of history.

The Apologists' Occasion for Writing

The settings of Irenaeus and the Apologists are quite similar. Regarding the time in which they wrote, Irenaeus can be regarded as a near contemporary of Athenagoras and Theophilus. Moreover, Irenaeus' diverse geographical settings overlap with Justin's Roman setting and Theophilus' Antiochene setting—although Smyrna and Antioch are separated by a large distance, Jewish Christianity is the dominant influence in both locales. Nevertheless, the occasions of the Apologists' respective writings are different from that of Irenaeus. The bishop of Lyons was concerned with variations of Christianity, groups who called themselves Christians, read the same scriptures, and professed to believe in and worship the same God revealed in Jesus Christ. Although Irenaeus perceived these groups as outside the boundaries of the true faith, his dispute with the 'Gnostics' may be described as an internal struggle. The Apologists, on the other hand, were concerned with those groups outside the faith who made no pretense regarding their aversion to Christian belief and who persecuted Christians for their beliefs. Justin and Athenagoras both address their works to the current Roman emperors, the former to Antoninus Pius and his two sons, the latter to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. (Whether these treatises ever reached them is another matter.) Theophilus writes not to an emperor, but to an individual who, like the emperors, was an avowed polytheist and who apparently had made it his business to antagonize the Antiochene bishop. Justin's *Dial.* is addressed to a Jew who, although not a pagan, is still an outsider who likely did not share Justin's beliefs.¹³⁸ In other

is a departure from the older view, which was skeptical as to Theophilus' knowledge of philosophy or even his ability to use properly the philosophical sourcebooks available to him. For an example of this view, see Grant, "Problem of Theophilus," 182–85.

137 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.24.1. In his *Lives of Illustrious Men*, Jerome reports that these unnamed works were well fitted for the edification of the church.

138 Conversely, Irenaeus could assume that the 'Gnostics' and Marcionites attached some sort of salvific significance to Jesus and therefore attributed some revelatory significance to the Christian writings.

words, the Apologists' dispute with the pagans, and in the case of the *Dial.*, the Jews, was an external struggle.

In each of their works, the Apologists request nothing more than a fair hearing of their beliefs because of the unjust derisions and persecutions the Christians were undergoing. By the middle second century, the Christians had become the subject of much disdain and scorn. Justin reports that there had been "scattered abroad many false and godless accusations, none of which apply to us."¹³⁹ He elsewhere hints that these accusations included child sacrifice, licentious sexual acts, and cannibalism.¹⁴⁰ Somewhat less sensational, although equally as serious, was the charge of atheism because Christians refused to participate in the pagan and imperial cults, a charge that Justin and Athenagoras spend considerable text refuting. While these accusations and rumors were unfounded, they often were accepted as truth by authorities. The Edict of Trajan, issued in 112 C.E., stated that a person could be sentenced to death, apart from any evidence of wrongdoing, simply because he or she bore the name 'Christian.'¹⁴¹ Therefore, the Apologists aimed to reveal the beliefs and practices of the Christians in order to show the inherent rationality of the religion and its precedence and correspondence to the beliefs of respected Greek philosophical systems. If the pagans, and above all the emperors who were lovers of reason, could see the reasonable truth of Christianity, then they would quell the unfounded persecutions and grant the Christian religion the same respect and leniency as other religions of the Roman Empire received.¹⁴²

Accordingly, the Apologists were not concerned with distinguishing Christian truth from false doctrines, as I argued was the case with Irenaeus; rather, they were concerned with displaying the commonalities between Christianity and the wisdom of the Greeks. As a result, they largely avoided particulars of Christian doctrine in favor of a more generic presentation of the transcendent, monotheistic God. Of the three, only Justin mentions Jesus and even in Justin's works, Jesus is presented in the mold of Socrates (a holy man the Greeks could understand).¹⁴³ Athenagoras refers to the Christian belief in

¹³⁹ 1 *Apol.* 10.6, ACW 56:29.

¹⁴⁰ 2 *Apol.* 2.

¹⁴¹ Justin and Athenagoras both attack the logic behind this edict by noting that names themselves do not earn good or evil judgments, but rather, that one must be judged on actions. See 1 *Apol.* 4.1–3 and *Leg.* 2.1.

¹⁴² At this point *Dial.* stands the furthest from the other Apologists' writings. Although the New Testament, notably Acts, provides a record of Jewish persecution of Christians, the content of the *Dial.* does not address persecution as a motivation for the dispute between Justin and Trypho.

¹⁴³ See 1 *Apol.* 5 and 2 *Apol.* 10.

resurrection not as an end to itself, but rather as an argument against the charge of cannibalism.¹⁴⁴ Conversely, he finds the precedent for Christian monotheism in the statements of the Greek poets and philosophers. Collectively, the poets affirm that the pagan gods are not eternal but are created entities like humans.¹⁴⁵ Plato said that the true God is one and the Father of all things, the very attributes Athenagoras proclaims the Christians believe.¹⁴⁶ Aristotle affirmed God as the unmoved one who was the cause of motion of everything else.¹⁴⁷ The Stoics proclaimed that God is one and that he pervades the universe.¹⁴⁸ As we have seen, Theophilus is also vague on specifically Christian beliefs, while his doctrine of the Logos employs the language of Stoic discourse. The central figure of both Athenagoras' and Theophilus' account is not Jesus Christ, but the pre-existent Logos, a figure who would have been quite recognizable to the Greeks.

The Apologists present Christian doctrine not in the language of the church, as was the case with Irenaeus, but rather in the language of philosophy. Presenting Christian doctrine in the language of the philosophers suited the occasions of the Apologists. They had appealed to the Roman emperors as philosophers and now they attempted to show that Christianity espoused nothing other than the best of Greek philosophy. These differences in occasion and method of argumentation mark the resulting Trinitarian theologies of these figures, and as a result, these differences will continue to come to bear in the present study.

Conclusion

In this opening chapter, I have addressed the historical settings of both the Apologists and Irenaeus, as well as the manner in which their respective settings shaped the occasion of their writings and their manner of argumentation. I have shown that the Apologists, with the possible exception of Theophilus, likely received more formal training in Greek philosophy than Irenaeus, thereby resulting in a more positive estimation of its value. I have shown also a difference in the respective historical occasions of the Apologists and Irenaeus. The former were interested only in presenting their understanding

¹⁴⁴ *Leg.* 36.

¹⁴⁵ *Leg.* 6–7.

¹⁴⁶ *Leg.* 6.2.

¹⁴⁷ *Leg.* 6.3.

¹⁴⁸ *Leg.* 6.4.

of Christianity as a rational religion, akin to the many religions tolerated by the Roman emperors. This led to a method of argumentation that sought to display the commonalities between Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. The primary tool in this method is the use of philosophical language to relate Christian doctrine. Conversely, Irenaeus was interested in presenting his understanding of Christianity as the true teaching of Jesus Christ handed down from the apostles against the variant interpretations of Christianity offered in the works of his opponents. This occasion demanded a method of argumentation that, with the language of the church, distinguished the doctrines and scriptural interpretations of the church from the same of his opponents. The language of Greek philosophy was relegated to the side of his opponents as a proof of their inaccuracies. With these distinctions in mind, I am now prepared to turn to these figures' respective understandings of God the Father.

God the Father

The focus of the present chapter is the Apologists' and Irenaeus' understanding of the First Person,¹ the divine being to whom they refer most often as 'Father' (Πατήρ) and 'God' (Θεός). My investigation will focus on two broad facets of their respective understandings. The first facet regards the identity of the divine being, or, to frame it in terms of a question: *'who is the God of Christian belief and worship?'* Included under this rubric will be these figures' use of scriptural and traditional titles that correspond both to actions and attributes of God. The second facet, a more common philosophical inquiry, regards the nature of the divine being *qua* being, or, to frame it in terms of a question: *'what is the divine being?'* Included under this rubric are such questions as what each figure means by divine simplicity, transcendence, and the like. Throughout my treatment, I will return periodically to the question of the nature of theological language to determine the manner in which each figure uses language to describe a transcendent and divine being. The question looms large because, as noted above, a certain process of reasoning from human experience to accounts of the divine nature is prevalent in Valentinian theology.

My thesis in this chapter is that whereas the Apologists understand the identity and nature of God the Father according to the Middle Platonic vision of God as a transcendent and distant being unable to interact with material creation, Irenaeus alters this understanding in order to reject the unknown, transcendent, and spatially distant God featured in Valentinian theology. First, Irenaeus argues that the title 'Father' indicates not what God does, but who God is underscoring the intimate relationship between the First and Second Persons and, as a result, between God and humanity. Second, he alters the

1 The nomenclature of 'person' (ὑπόστασις, *persona*) in the technical, Trinitarian sense of the later fourth century is anachronistic in the second century. While all the figures in this study understand a real distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit, they have yet to develop technical terminology to distinguish them other than through the use of different titles. Still, in describing these figures' respective theologies, the terminology of First, Second, and Third Person is useful insofar as it presents a neutral means of reference. Nevertheless, while I will refer to Father, Son, and Spirit by this traditional nomenclature throughout this study, I do not claim this terminology as descriptive of these figures' Trinitarian theologies. When referring to Father, Son, and Spirit together, as in the introduction above, I will use the term 'entities' as a neutral way of acknowledging their collective belief that these are real and distinct divine or semi-divine beings.

common understanding of divine transcendence from a relative transcendence based on a spatial notion of divinity to an absolute transcendence based on a non-spatial notion of divinity sustained by the concept of 'spirit.' Irenaeus' argument results in a divine being who is transcendent, yet able to interact with material creation by means of the economy.

The Apologists

The Identity of God

As noted in the previous chapter, the primary charge facing Christians that occasioned the Apologists' respective works was that of atheism. This widespread accusation against the Christians was the result of their refusal to take part in pagan rituals and the burgeoning imperial cult, actions expected of all Roman subjects. Thus, in order to refute this charge, the Apologists' first task was to identify the God whom they worshipped and in whom they believed. All three figures unequivocally identify this God as the one God of the ancient Jewish faith, the God whom the Christians had proclaimed brought a new revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, in accord with their purpose of showing the reasonableness of Christianity, they do not define this God in such a way that would highlight his uniqueness (although the fact that he is the only God is crucial to each account). As a result, the Apologists do not probe the intricacies of God's salvific acts in history, a method prominent, for example, in Christian writings of the first century, including those writings that would eventually collectively become the New Testament. Rather, the Apologists speak of this God and his acts in ways that would have been intelligible to Greco-Roman readers.²

The Apologists first identify this God through his act of creating the cosmos. Justin writes, "We are not, therefore, as the atheists, since we worship the Creator [Δημιουργός] of the universe..."³ Likewise, Athenagoras writes

2 The *Dial.* is an exception here. Justin often identifies God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or refers to the Exodus and the law and other important Jewish events and figures (e.g., *Dial.* 11, 19–20, 40). Still, as I will show, the influence of Middle Platonism on Justin's concept of God remains, which suggests that the method of the *Apologies* is not simply a rhetorical device appropriate for the occasion but is truly indicative of Justin's understanding.

3 1 *Apol.* 13.1. Munier identifies God's act of creating the "unwavering foundation and the necessary point of departure of the religious search and theological reflection of Justin." Munier, *L'Apologie de saint Justin philosophe et martyr* (Fribourg, Suisse: Éditions Universitaires, 1994), 96. According to Munier, the *Apologies* contain five formulas of the faith (1 *Apol.* 6.1–2, 13.1,

that Christians believe in “one God, the Maker [Ποιητής] of the universe, who himself does not come into being (because being does not come into being, non-being does) but who has made all things...”⁴ Theophilus asserts that the act of creation is what makes this being divine. He connects the etymology of the title Θεός with the creative act when he writes, “He is called God because he established everything on his own steadfastness and because he runs; the word ‘run’ means to run and set in motion and energize and nourish and provide and govern everything and *to make everything alive*.”⁵ To be sure, the Apologists associate other actions with God, but no action is as proper to divinity as the act of creating. Bernard Pouderon’s comment on Athenagoras applies to all three, “the creative act, like the providential act, is not simply an activity of God, it is his function, *necessary and sufficient for justifying his existence*.”⁶ This aspect of the Apologists’ understanding of God reflects a commonplace characteristic of second century Jewish and Christian thinking: to create is to be God and to be God is to create.⁷

The Apologists’ primary source confirming the identity of God as Creator of the cosmos is the Jewish scriptures. Nevertheless, the Apologists normally are content to imply their source through unattributed Jewish scriptural imagery, as opposed to making direct citations. For example, Theophilus writes, “This is my God, the Lord of the universe, who *alone spread out the heaven and determined the breadth of what is under heaven, who stirs up the deep of the sea and makes its waves resound, who rules over its power and pacifies the movement of the waves, who established the earth upon the waters* and gave a spirit to nourish it.”⁸ Similarly, Athenagoras writes, “The best sacrifice to [God] is for us to know who stretched out the heavens and gave them their spherical form and established the earth as a centre, who brought together water into seas and

61.3, 65.3, and 67.2), and in each case God the Father, Creator of the universe, occupies the first place.

4 *Leg.* 4.2.

5 *Autol.* 1.4 in *Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum*, trans. Robert M. Grant, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 7. Subsequent references to this translation of *Autol.* will be marked in the footnotes with Grant followed by the page number.

6 Pouderon, *Philosophe Chrétien*, 116–17, italics added.

7 Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology,” *AugStud* 39, no. 2 (2008): 169–86.

8 *Autol.* 1.7, Grant, 11, italics original to Grant marking scriptural citations and allusions. The allusions here come from Job 9:8, 38:18; Pss. [LXX] 64:8, 88:10, and 23:2.

divided light from the darkness, who adorned the sky with stars and caused the earth to make every seed spring up, who made animals and formed man.”⁹

Occasionally, however, the Apologists are explicit in their use of the Jewish scriptures. Yet, even in these instances, the passages chosen reflect a desire not to show the uniqueness of their God, but rather, to make this God intelligible to Greco-Roman ears. Thus, with the exception of Theophilus, the Jewish creation stories of the first two chapters of Genesis factor in little to their accounts. Athenagoras, for example, prefers scriptures that speak more generally of God’s power.¹⁰ Justin prefers passages that speak of God’s use of agency. His use of Genesis in general is not to show God’s unique power or the sequence of the creation, but to show the presence of the Spirit with God in the beginning, as this figure may be aligned with intermediaries in Middle Platonic accounts of creation.¹¹ Athenagoras also prefers those passages that speak of the presence of intermediary figures with God in creation, while surprisingly failing to use Genesis at all.¹²

Thus, in their understanding of God as the Creator of the cosmos, the Apologists are informed by the scriptures and traditions that led to the persecutions that occasioned their works. Furthermore, the Apologists do not attempt to hide this fact. Nevertheless, the Apologists’ lack of concern for consistently identifying their source as scripture, as well as their unique choices for the passages they do highlight, suggests a collective motive not to align themselves with the Jews nor with the particular Jewish religion but to argue that the God in whom they believe as a result of the revelation of the Jewish scriptures is in fact the universal God known also to the philosophers.

To further the connection of their God with the God of the philosophers, and in particular the Middle Platonists, the Apologists consistently refer to their God as ‘Father’ (Πατήρ). Although this title is traditionally identified with Christian usage, it has its origin in Greek philosophy. In the most influential Platonic treatise upon second century philosophy, the *Timaeus* (hereafter *Tim.*), Plato had referred to God as ‘Father’ in connection with his act of creating the world. Plato writes, “Now to discover the Maker and Father of this Universe were a task indeed; and having discovered Him, to declare Him unto

9 *Leg.* 13.2 in *Athenagoras, Legatio and De Resurrectione*, ed. and trans. William R. Schoedel, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 27, 29. Subsequent references to this translation of *Leg.* will be marked in the footnotes with Schoedel followed by the page number.

10 He quotes Isa. 43:10–11, 44:6 in *Leg.* 9.2.

11 *1 Apol.* 60. I will explore the concept of intermediaries in creation in a later chapter.

12 He quotes Prov. 8:3 and Wisd. 7:25 in *Leg.* 10.4.

all men were a thing impossible.”¹³ This passage, coming in the context of an extended treatise on the origin of the universe, was central to Middle Platonic writings on God,¹⁴ and those writers continued Plato’s tradition of referring to God as ‘Father’ to describe his identity as Creator. The *Didask.* states, “[God] is Father through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect and the soul of the world in accordance with himself and his own thoughts.”¹⁵ Here, and throughout *Didask.* 10, the Middle Platonic author emphasizes the divine acts of creation and providence in connection with the title ‘Father.’

Before addressing the Apologists’ use of ‘Father,’ it is worth noting for my purposes that this philosophical use of ‘Father’ is distinct from the meaning of the title employed in the writings that would become the New Testament. The writers of the Gospels, for example, had used the title ‘Father’ not to discuss God’s creative function, or any other function for that matter, but to discuss his unique, filial relationship to the Second Person and, his analogous, salvific relationship to human beings as a result of this filial relationship. A few examples from the fourth Gospel will demonstrate.

13 *Tim.* 28c. in *Plato* 9, trans. R.G. Bury, LCL 234 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 51. Subsequent references to this translation of *Tim.* will be marked in the footnotes with LCL 234 followed by the page number. See also *Tim.* 37c and 41a. G. Schrenk identifies Plato as the first figure to introduce to antiquity a concept that becomes commonplace, namely, Fatherhood as a metaphor for describing God’s relationship with the world as its generator or creator. G. Quell and Schrenk, “Πατήρ” ΤΔΝΤ, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:945–1022. Conversely, this usage rarely is witnessed in the Jewish scriptures. Quell writes, “[‘Father’] was never recognized [in the Hebrew Bible] as adequate, however, to describe the nature of God or the manner of His relationship to man. When thought of or used in this way, it always found opponents who instinctively felt that this would lead back to worship of the ancient gods which had been abolished from the days of Joshua.” Quell and Schrenk, “Πατήρ,” ΤΔΝΤ 5:970. The same authors note an increase in the use of ‘Father’ as a divine title in later Judaism, but more in the sense of God as the particular, theocratic Father of Israel. Quell and Schrenk, “Πατήρ,” ΤΔΝΤ 5:978–82. This development lies beyond the purview of the current discussion insofar as the Apologists’ source for their use of ‘Father’ emerges not from Second Temple Judaism but instead from Middle Platonist interpretations of *Tim.*

14 For example, the *Didask.* alludes to the passage in the introductory statement of *Didask.* 10, the chapter that addresses the nature of God.

15 *Didask.* 10.3. in *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*, trans. John Dillon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 18. Subsequent references to this translation of *Didask.* will be marked in the footnotes with Dillon followed by the page number.

The author of the fourth Gospel establishes the unique connection between God and the Second Person (called here the Logos) in the prologue (John 1:14, 18) and then exploits it in developing his notion of Jesus as the Father's special revelation. For example, in a discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus says, "I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf." Then they said to him, 'Where is your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'¹⁶ Similarly, in a discussion with his disciples, Jesus says:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works."¹⁷

These passages, and others like them, suggest that the Son's filial relationship to the Father allows him to reveal the Father to others: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."¹⁸ Furthermore, the filial relationship grounds Paul's use of the notion of adoption as one image of understanding the process of salvation.¹⁹ While not necessarily a Trinitarian reality, such a use of 'Father' does indicate something not of the actions of God, but of the nature of God, namely, that the divine nature is intimately related to the pre-existent Logos who became flesh and that this relationship is crucial for the redemptive reality of Jesus' person and work.²⁰

16 John 8:18–19, NRSV translation.

17 John 14:6–10, NRSV translation.

18 A similar notion appears occasionally in the synoptic Gospels as well, e.g., Matt. 11:27: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." NRSV translation

19 See Rom. 8:15, 23, 9:4; Gal. 4:5, Eph. 1:5.

20 Past scholarship has rightly noted the uniqueness of this definition of 'Father' among ancient writers. Luis F. Ladaria notes the novelty of the New Testament's use of 'Father' over against the Old Testament's use and considers the Fatherhood of God in relation to Jesus and in relation to humans as adoptive children one of Christianity's distinctive ideas. Ladaria, "Tam Pater nemo: Quelques réflexions sur la paternité de Dieu,"

The Apologists' use of the divine title 'Father' is consistent, not with this specifically Christian usage of 'Father,' but with the older Platonic understanding likely known to them through the Middle Platonic interpretation of Plato's *Tim.* 28c passage.²¹ 'Father' indicates for them God's creative and providential functions, and rarely has any reference to the Son. Theophilus, in fact, never uses 'Father' to refer to God's relationship with the Second Person. For the Antiochene bishop, God is Father only in the Middle Platonic sense that he is "before the universe."²² In all of Athenagoras' uses of 'Father,' only one reflects a unique relationship between the First and Second Persons. He writes, "[F]or as all things have been subjected to you [Marcus Aurelius and Commodus], a father and a son, who have received your kingdom from above . . . so all things are subordinated to the one God and the Logos that is from him whom we consider his inseparable Son."²³ Nevertheless, the statement offers no insight into the nature of God; instead, it acts as a means of connecting Christian nomenclature to contemporary Roman affairs (at the time of Athenagoras' writing, Marcus Aurelius was ruling with his son Commodus).

Of the three apologists in this study, only Justin shows an understanding of the unique relationship between the First and Second Persons, reflected occasionally in his use of 'Father.'²⁴ Nonetheless, the overwhelming number of his uses of the title follows the Middle Platonic line.²⁵ In perhaps an intentional

Transversalités 107 (2008): 93–123. Similarly, for Quell and Schrenk the Christian understanding, and to a certain extent the Second Temple Judaic understanding, of 'Father' represents a second line of tradition, distinguished from the Greek understanding. Schrenk's comments on John's use of 'Father' demonstrate this thesis. He writes, "[In his use of πατήρ], Jn. differs from the Greek world by taking as his point of departure, not a veneration of the πατήρ τῶν ὅλων, but solely and simply the truth that the Son, who is sent, is uniquely related to the Father and is the first to say πατήρ in the full sense . . . The whole event of salvation is anchored in the most intimate union between Father and Son." Quell and Schrenk, "Πατήρ" TDNT 5:997, 999.

21 Like the Middle Platonists, the Apologists focused on the *Tim.* 28c passage in their discussions of God. Both Justin and Athenagoras directly cite the passage (2 *Apol.* 10.6, *Leg.* 6.2), and Theophilus alludes to it (*Autol.* 2.4).

22 *Autol.* 1.4. Theophilus only refers to the Logos as 'Son' once but the title 'Father' is not linked to the Son in this context (*Autol.* 2.22).

23 *Leg.* 18.2, Schoedel, 37 with minor revisions.

24 1 *Apol.* 12.9, 63.14–15, *Dial.* 102.2, 103.3, 115.4.

25 For more on Justin's understanding of the Fatherhood of God as derived from Middle Platonism, see Goodenough, *Justin Martyr*, 123–39, Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 27–38, Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 17–28, Munier, *Apologie*, 97–98 and, most recently, Peter Widdicombe, "Justin Martyr and the Fatherhood of God," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 54, no. 1 (1998): 109–26. My conclusions align with those of Widdicombe, although he gives more

imitation of the *Tim.* 28c passage, Justin frequently pairs Πατήρ with another descriptor such as ‘Master’ (Δεσπότης),²⁶ ‘Maker’ (Ποιητής),²⁷ and ‘Creator’ (Δημιουργός).²⁸ Each of these titles connects the title ‘Father’ with the act of creating, thereby suggesting a significance other than a specifically Christian meaning that connects the Father and the Son in a unique relationship for revelatory and redemptive purposes.

Nevertheless, because Justin does show some understanding of the filial relationship between the First and Second Persons through his use of ‘Father,’ some scholars have argued that the Middle Platonic use is not the controlling metaphor, but is subsumed under the larger, specifically Christian use of ‘Father’ as indicative of the Father’s special relationship to the Son.²⁹ The sheer number of Middle Platonic uses verses uses that could be classified as specifically Christian is argument enough against this claim. Moreover, apart from any specific use of the title, Justin’s theology of all divine titles confirms

prominence to scripture’s influence in Justin’s use of the absolute phrase ‘the Father’ than I would allow. I think that the Middle Platonic interpretation controls Justin’s use of ‘Father’ except for the few places he specifies otherwise.

26 1 *Apol.* 12.9, 36.2, 40.7, 44.1, 46.5, 61.3, 61.10.

27 1 *Apol.* 26.5, *Dial.* 7.3, 56.1, 6, 60.2, 67.6.

28 1 *Apol.* 8.2, 63.11, 2 *Apol.* 10.6. ‘Δημιουργός’ also links ‘Father’ to the act of providence. Repeatedly throughout the *Dial.*, Justin uses Πατήρ to refer to God when he describes his providential will. See *Dial.* 43.1, 48.3, 60.3, 61.1 and 3, 63.1, 75.4, 76.1 and 7, 85.1, 88.4, 98.2, 102.5.

29 Lebreton, for example, acknowledges that Justin’s use follows, what he calls, a “Platonist” understanding and is not connected to his relationship to the Son, but he quickly observes that Justin knows God “is also, by nature, the Father of Christ, his unique Son, and by virtue of the adoption which he has accorded them, the Father of all the Christians.” Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:421. Oddly, the texts he cites in support of his contention only tangentially relate to such a claim. For example, the texts he lists from the *Dial.* as evidence of his claim show only that Christians are the new Israel, not adopted sons of the Father God. Similarly, Ladaria’s study of Justin fails to include any consideration of the influence of Middle Platonism. Ladaria, “Tam Pater nemo,” 97–98. He assumes that Justin’s understanding of what Ladaria calls God’s “universal Fatherhood” is a development from the New Testament understanding. In other words, Ladaria contends that for Justin, God is Father of all creation because of his love for all creation, not because of his creative or providential functions. Nonetheless, Justin’s use of ‘Father’ has more in common with Middle Platonism, where God’s role as Creator and providential Master is not a function of his love for creation, but of his goodness. Justin recognizes that God loves his creation, but he does not use God’s Fatherhood to support this point. As I will show momentarily, the failure of these scholars to see the Middle Platonic use of ‘Father’ as a controlling metaphor for Justin results in their failure to see the important difference between Justin and Irenaeus on this count.

his understanding of 'Father' as descriptive of God's creative function because he believes that no divine title can describe God's nature. In a summary statement in the 2 *Apol.*, Justin writes, "But to the Father of all, who is unbegotten, a name is not given. For by whatever name He is called, He has as His elder, the one who gives Him the name. But these words Father, and God, and Creator, and Lord and Master, are not names, but appellations *derived from His good deeds and works*."³⁰ Justin is clear that all divine titles, including 'Father' which is listed, are derived from his works. However, the specifically Christian use of 'Father,' which some scholars have claimed for Justin, is not derived from his works, but rather, indicates something about his nature, namely, his special, filial relationship to the Son. Thus, while Justin might at times refer to this relationship with 'Father,' perhaps as a result of his reading of certain first century Christian works, his normative understanding aligns with the Middle Platonic use of 'Father' as derived from and indicative of God's creative work.

The Apologists' use of the title 'Father' is understandable given their purpose of making God intelligible to Greco-Roman readers. While the Middle Platonists had an understanding of intermediary figures, none of them were connected to the One by means of an analogy to an earthly, filial relationship. The lack of such a meaning in the Apologists' writings is significant for my purposes because it precludes the title 'Father' as carrying any Trinitarian significance. In other words, 'Father' says nothing about the nature of God, which would have entailed reference to the Son. 'Father' only describes what God does, he creates and rules. As Justin notes in a pairing that is quite common throughout his writings, "For, impelled by the desire for the eternal and pure life, we seek to dwell with God, the Father and Creator of all things, and hasten to confess [our faith] . . ."³¹

Given the Apologists' occasion and the urgency with which they wrote, it is not surprising that so many elements of Middle Platonism have colored their writings. What is, on the contrary, surprising is that they do not shy from naming the identity of the God in whom they believe and worship as the God of the Jewish scriptures, a point that has not always been adequately acknowledged in past studies correlating the Apologists and Middle Platonists. Nevertheless, when they turn to describing the nature of this divine being, it is indeed the case that they rely almost solely on Middle Platonist definitions, which, in some ways, overshadows their insistence on the identity of God as Creator. To this query, I now turn.

³⁰ 2 *Apol.* 6.1–2, ACW 56:77, italics added.

³¹ 1 *Apol.* 8.

The Nature of God

Although the identity of their God is the Creator and Ruler of all things, a definition that necessarily implies some level of divine involvement in the material world, the Apologists believe the quality that most clearly defines the divine nature is its transcendence, its utter distinction and difference from everything material. While they will have recourse to intermediaries in their description of the act of creation, which I will address in a subsequent chapter, the Apologists do not, generally, perceive any incompatibility between God's identity as Creator of the material world and his transcendent divine nature. In fact, Athenagoras unites these divine characteristics in a programmatic statement about Christian belief. He writes, "We have brought before you a God who is one, the uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite, who can be apprehended by mind and reason alone, who is encompassed by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power, and who created, adorned, and now rules the universe through his Logos that is from him . . ." ³² Similar definitions are present in all of the Apologists' writings.

The impetus for the emphasis on the divine transcendence is found not in the Jewish scriptures or the first century Christian writings, but rather, in the writings of the Middle Platonists. Transcendence was the defining quality of divinity in the Middle Platonist mind. As John Dillon notes, "[I]t is common ground for all Platonists that between God and Man there must be a host of intermediaries, that God may not be contaminated or disturbed by a too close involvement with Matter." ³³ The Athenagoran passage quoted previously in fact finds a striking parallel in the *Didask.*, which states, "The primary god, then, is eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect' (that is, deficient in no respect), 'ever-perfect' (that is, always perfect), and 'all-perfect' (that is, perfect in all respects) . . . ineffable and graspable only by the intellect . . . God is partless, by reason of the fact that there is nothing prior to him . . ." ³⁴ The only conceptual difference between these two definitions is that Athenagoras includes as a matter of first priority the truth that God creates. Nonetheless, the underlying feature of the divine nature is the same in both statements, namely, transcendence from the material world.

As Athenagoras' statement demonstrates, the Apologists express the divine transcendence most consistently through the use of negative definitions, a technique mirrored in Middle Platonist writings. Words such as uncreated (ἀγέννητος), eternal (ἄϊδιος), invisible (ἄόρατος), and inexpressible (ἄρρητος)

³² *Leg.* 10.1, Schoedel, 21 with minor revisions.

³³ Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 47.

³⁴ *Didask.* 10.3–4, 7, Dillon, 18–19.

are common in the Apologists' writings and implicitly show that the divine nature is beyond human words and human comprehension.³⁵ Nevertheless, the Apologists employ a second method of maintaining the divine transcendence that, somewhat ironically, is provided by their conviction of God's identity as Creator of all things. Because God is the Creator, the Apologists insist, he alone is properly called 'uncreated' (ἀγέννητος or ἀγένητος);³⁶ everything else in the cosmos is created or has God as its first principle (ἀρχή) while God himself is without a first principle (ἀναρχος).

This understanding results in the idea, most prominently featured in Theophilus' thought, that God created all things out of nothing or *ex nihilo*. Theophilus writes, "[God] made everything out of the non-existent. For there was nothing coeval with God..."³⁷ Elsewhere, he writes, "God made everything out of what did not exist, bringing it into existence so that his greatness might be known and apprehended through his works."³⁸ The formulation of creation out of nothing is distinct from the Middle Platonic view of creation. The practitioners of Middle Platonism identified two uncreated entities, namely an active Monad and a passive or indefinite Dyad, God and matter respectively. They describe the process of creation as the active Monad, or formal principle, entering the passive Dyad, or material principle, in order to give it form. The *Didask.* describes creation as follows, "[Plato] declares that [matter] has the characteristic of receiving the whole realm of generation by performing the role of a nurse in sustaining it, and receiving all the forms, while of itself remaining without shape, or quality, or form, but it can be moulded and

35 See Pouderon, *Philosophe Chrétien*, 118–19 for a list of terms Athenagoras uses of divinity that reflect a Middle Platonic source.

36 In more developed Trinitarian thought, these two words will be distinguished with ἀγένητος (uncreated) referring to both the Father and the Son, and ἀγέννητος (unbegotten) referring exclusively to the Father. In some older scholarship, this distinction is read into the second century. Scholars now agree generally that the words were still undifferentiated in the second century. Both descriptors refer to the truth that God is without a beginning and thereby serve to distinguish him from created things. On this point, see Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 330n21, Lebreton, "Agennetos dans la tradition philosophique et dans la littérature chrétienne du II siècle," *RSR* 16 (1926): 431–43, and Prestige, *Patristic Thought*, 39–54. Lebreton shows that although the ἀγέν(ν)ητος/γεν(ν)ητός distinction was a device common to philosophical schools, the Apologists and later Christians were more restrictive with their use of ἀγέν(ν)ητος. For the Christians, it only properly referred to the divine, whereas many philosophical schools attributed the property of ἀγέν(ν)ητος to the soul or to matter. Lebreton, "Agennetos," 440.

37 *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 39.

38 *Autol.* 1.4, Grant, 7 with minor revisions.

imprinted with such impressions like a mould and shaped by these, having no shape or quality of its own . . . [God] created [the world], then, out of the totality of matter."³⁹ Both eternal principles are necessary in order for creation to be realized.

Justin and Athenagoras are not as clear on their understanding of creation *ex nihilo*.⁴⁰ In fact, several of their statements seem to follow the Middle Platonist line. For example, Justin writes, "And we have been taught that in the beginning He of His goodness, for people's sakes, formed all things out of unformed matter . . ."⁴¹ Similarly, in *Leg.* 10.3, Athenagoras speaks of matter as "an entity without qualities" which the Logos enters to give form. Despite these statements, several other factors of their respective theologies suggest, to use Eric Osborn's helpful terminology, that although Justin and Athenagoras lack the formula of creation *ex nihilo*, they understand and affirm the concept.⁴² For example, any discussion of matter as a first principle is missing in both Justin's and Athenagoras' works. The Middle Platonists include such a discussion in their works because as an uncreated entity, matter exists along with God as a first principle. More to the point, both Justin and Athenagoras, like Theophilus, acknowledge God as the only uncreated being.⁴³ Thus, the logic of their works supports the conclusion that, although Justin and Athenagoras speak at times of unformed matter, their emphasis on God as the only uncreated being is their controlling image of the creative act. If God alone is ἀγέν(ν)ητος, then by definition, matter is not eternal.⁴⁴

39 *Didask.* 8.2, 12.2, Dillon, 15, 21. For a general overview of the Middle Platonist understanding of creation, see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 45–49.

40 A number of scholars argue that the earlier two Apologists affirm the Middle Platonic belief in eternal, unformed matter. For strong arguments in favor of the latter view, see Fantino, "L'Origine de la doctrine de la création *ex nihilo*: À propos de l'ouvrage de G. May," *RSPHTH* 80 (1996): 589–602 and N. Joseph Torchia, "Theories of Creation in the Second Century Apologists and their Middle Platonic Background," in *SP* 26 (Peeters: Leuven, 1993), 192–99.

41 *1 Apol.* 10.2, ACW 56:28. See also *1 Apol.* 59.

42 Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 65–68.

43 See, for example, *Dial.* 5.4 and *Leg.* 8.7. Torchia admits the latter point, writing, "In the writers under scrutiny, we find a well-defined ontological distinction between God and matter or more precisely, between God and all mutable, corruptible reality. For each, God is the unbegotten, ultimate causal principle for everything which exists." Torchia, "Theories of Creation," 192.

44 Theophilus may be clearer regarding the doctrine because of his proximity to Jewish traditions from where the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* likely originated. Indeed, Torchia speculates that Theophilus gets the doctrine directly from 2 Macc. 7:28, which reads, "[B]eg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them,

The Apologists, whether logically or explicitly, depart from the Middle Platonists at this point because they believe the eternal existence of unformed matter challenges the scriptural principle that God alone is uncreated, and that all things find their source in him. Here, their starting point with the identity of God has influenced their discussion of the nature of God. For example, in criticizing the Middle Platonic understanding of creation, Theophilus writes, "Plato and his followers acknowledge that God is uncreated, the Father and Maker of the universe; next they assume that uncreated matter is also God, and say that matter was coeval with God. But if God is uncreated and matter is uncreated, then according to the Platonists God is not the Maker of the universe..."⁴⁵ According to Theophilus' understanding of Middle Platonist philosophy, God is not a creator because he does not make matter. Instead, he merely shapes prime matter in the manner of a human artisan.

Moreover, if matter is uncreated, then it necessarily possesses divine qualities and the strict distinction between divinity and material is lost. Athenagoras writes, "If we then attribute one and the same power to the ruled and the ruling, we shall inadvertently make perishable, unstable, and changeable matter equal in rank to the uncreated, eternal, and ever self-same God."⁴⁶ Conversely, the Apologists identify the quality of ἀγέν(ν)ητος with the power to create, a power proper to God, alone. Theophilus writes, "But the power of God is revealed by his making whatever he wishes out of the non-existent, just as the ability to give life and motion belongs to no one but God alone."⁴⁷ Thus, the affirmation of creation *ex nihilo*, in the Apologists' mind, not only preserved the scriptural definition of God as sole creator of all things; it maintained the

and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being." NRSV translation. Torchia, "Theories of Creation," 195–96. Conversely, Fantino claims that this statement from 2 Macc. is simply another means of referring to the primordial chaos referred to in Gen. 1:2 and which other documents stemming from Second Temple Judaism, notably Wisd. 11:17 ("For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter..." [NRSV translation]), connect with the formless, eternal matter of Greek philosophy. Fantino, "La théologie de la création *ex nihilo* chez saint Irénée," in SP 26 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993): 126–35. Parenthetically, it may be useful to note that creation out of nothing appears in *Shepherd of Hermas* (Herm. Mand. 1.1). Theophilus may have known and been influenced by at least this section of the *Shepherd*, as his work shows the influence of two ideas both present in Herm. Mand. 1.1. On the second idea, see below p. 69n60.

45 Autol. 2.4, Grant, 27.

46 Leg. 22.3, Schoedel, 51.

47 Autol. 2.4, Grant, 27.

strict distinction between divinity and material, thus protecting the divine transcendence.

In addition to negative definitions and creation *ex nihilo*, the Apologists employ a third method to maintain the separation between God and matter, namely, the use of spatial imagery to describe the divine nature. The Apologists frequently describe God as physically far removed from the material world, located in his own place (τόπος, χώρα) somewhere far 'above' the world, such that the divine nature is incapable of being in contact with material things.⁴⁸ For example, Justin writes, "For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor arises, but always remains in his place [χώρα], wherever it may be . . ."⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Justin describes God's place as the "super-celestial region [τοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὑπερουρανίοις] [which] has never been seen by any man" but where God "forever abides . . ."⁵⁰ Plato's *Phaedrus* likely serves as the antecedent for the notion of a 'super-celestial place' where the divine dwells, as André Méhat has shown.⁵¹ Both Plato and Justin regarded this place with a reverential fear in their respective writings. Specifically, Plato described this place as accessible only to the mind, a thought reflected in Justin's statement that no man has ever seen the place of God.

In a similar vein, Athenagoras presents a logical argument for the oneness of God that is based on God existing in a place (τόπος). He argues that a second god logically cannot exist, since there would be no place in which he could dwell. The place of the Creator is "above the things created and around what he has made and adorned . . ."⁵² Consequently, there is no place for a second god, for he cannot be in the world "since that belongs to another," nor can he be "around the world since it is God the Maker of the world who is above it."⁵³

48 Throughout antiquity, the Greek terms τόπος and χώρα both refer to a literal 'place' or 'space.' Stoic writers are an exception. They distinguish the two terms and include them with κενόν (void) to form a tripartition to explain the genus 'space.' See, for example, Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.124. Conversely, the Middle Platonists are not as clear on a distinction, and specifically reject the notion of a void. See *Didask.* 13.3. The Apologists follow the Middle Platonists in not admitting of a distinction between τόπος and χώρα. Justin generally prefers χώρα while Athenagoras and Theophilus prefer τόπος, but the words are used for the same purpose, namely, to keep God separated from matter. (Justin also uses τόπος to describe God's place in the heavens [see *Dial.* 64.7]).

49 *Dial.* 127.2, FC 3:191.

50 *Dial.* 56.1, FC 3:83 with minor revisions. See also *Dial.* 60.2.

51 Méhat, "Le 'lieu supracélestre' de Saint Justin à Origène," in *Forma futura: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975), 282–94.

52 *Leg.* 8.4, Schoedel, 17.

53 *Leg.* 8.4, Schoedel, 19.

The logic of the argument would seem to depend upon God's ability to inhabit a place. In contrast to this logical argument, Theophilus suggests that spatial imagery for the divine is grounded in scripture's account of creation. He writes, "The unique spirit occupied the place [τόπον] of light and was *situated between* the water and the heaven so that, so to speak, the darkness might not communicate with the heaven, which was *nearer* to God, before God said: 'Let there be light.'"⁵⁴ Here, the transcendent, divine realm is separated from the material realm so that divinity might not be corrupted through mixing with material.

These spatial descriptions, however straightforward, raise the question of theological language addressed at the beginning of this chapter. How do the Apologists intend their spatial language here? If they are speaking literally, then the implication is that God literally exists in his own place. Such an understanding would blatantly contradict their negative descriptions. In fact, among the negative descriptions in Justin's and Theophilus' writings is the explicit claim that God cannot be confined or circumscribed in a place. Justin writes, "Yet [God] surveys all things, knows all things, and none of us has escaped his notice. Nor is he moved who cannot be contained in any place [ἀχώρητος], not even in the whole universe, for he existed even before the universe was created."⁵⁵ Similarly, Theophilus writes, "[God] is not visible by fleshly eyes because he is unconfined [ἀχώρητον]."⁵⁶ In another place, Theophilus even articulates the difficulty with ascribing spatial language to God. He writes, "But it is characteristic of the Most High and Almighty God . . . not to be confined in a place [τὸ ἐν τόπῳ χωρεῖσθαι]; otherwise, the place [τόπος] containing him would be greater than he is, for what contains is greater than what is contained. God is not contained [οὐ χωρεῖται] but is himself the place [τόπος] of the universe."⁵⁷

Such statements suggest that the Apologists used their spatial imagery metaphorically. If the primary feature of the divine nature is transcendence, then this should be the controlling image. Spatial imagery would be merely a human manner of understanding an indescribable reality, as certainly Plato spoke

54 "Ἐν μὲν <οὖν> τὸ πνεῦμα, φωτὸς τόπον ἐπέχον, ἐμεσίτευεν τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἵνα τρόπῳ τινὶ μὴ κοινῶν τὸ σκότος τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐγγυτέρῳ ᾖ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸ τοῦ εἰπεῖν τὸν θεόν· Ἐνθὲν γὰρ φῶς." *Autol.* 2.13, Grant, 49, italics added. Marcovich's edition, following Prudentius Maran's 1742 edition, substitutes τύπον (figure, pattern) for τόπον here. I am here following the 1861 edition by J.C.T. Otto, used by both the SC and Grant, which employs τόπον. For information on this manuscript tradition, see Grant, *Theophilus*, xxi–xxiii.

55 *Dial.* 127.2, FC 3:191.

56 *Autol.* 1.5.

57 *Autol.* 2.3, Grant, with minor revisions, italics added.

of God's super-celestial place.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the word the Apologists most often use to describe God's inability to be contained in space, ἀχώρητος (the privative of χώρα), also appears in 'Gnostic' theology alongside of a literal spatial theology.⁵⁹ And although there is little precedent for ἀχώρητος in Greek philosophy (unlike other negative attributes used by the Apologists, ἀχώρητος is absent from the writings of Plato and the Middle Platonists), it does appear in earlier Jewish Christian writings, in which transcendence was not privileged, as part of a liturgical or rhythmic definition of God.⁶⁰ Thus, it is unclear whether the word ἀχώρητος itself did not negate spatial imagery or whether authors such as Theophilus simply do not resolve the incongruity of the Jewish Christian liturgical word and literal, spatial definitions of the divine transcendence.

Thus, while the Apologists are clear that the divine nature is transcendent, which indeed entails an understanding of God as being unable to be located in a place or confined by space, their use of spatial imagery, although likely metaphorical, somewhat enervates this claim by stressing God's apparent absence in the world. If God remains in his super-celestial place, as Justin writes, or if the divine realm is divided from the material realm by the place of created light, as Theophilus writes, then the biblical notion of an immanent God active in the affairs of humanity is precluded. Rather, God's actions in the world, as narrated by scripture, must be attributed to an intermediary agent or agents who, due to their lack of transcendence, are able to enter and move about in

58 Such is the conclusion of Malherbe in relation to Athenagoras' logical argument. Malherbe, "Athenagoras on the Location of God," in *TZ* 26, no. 1 (1970): 46–52. Malherbe is developing an earlier treatment of Athenagoras' argument by Grant. According to Grant, Athenagoras used τόπος metaphorically to demonstrate that there can only be one first principle. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 107–10.

59 As noted by Schoedel, "Topological' Theology," 90–92.

60 The author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* writes, "First of all, believe that God is one, who created all things and set them in order, and made out of what did not exist everything that is, and who contains all things but is himself alone uncontained [ἀχώρητος]." Herm. Mand. 1.1 in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and Translations*, trans. J.B. Lightfoot, ed. and rev. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 375. Subsequent references to this translation of the Apostolic Fathers will be marked in the footnotes with Holmes followed by the page number. Daniélou views the rhythmic refrain of 'containing/not contained,' and others like it (e.g., 'enclosing, not enclosed') as representing "the purest Judaeo-Christianity" and finds similar expressions in the *Preaching of Peter* (in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.39). Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 325–26. Incidentally, this Jewish Christian provenance of ἀχώρητος would explain why it is present in Justin and Theophilus but absent in Athenagoras.

the world.⁶¹ Such is the logical conclusion of the literal ‘topological theology’ of the Valentinians, one of many reasons Irenaeus was led to write. To his thought we now turn.

Irenaeus

The Identity of God

Irenaeus exhibits equal concern with identifying the God in whom Christians believe, although not for reasons characteristic of the Apologists’ works. Rather, he needs to establish the identity of the God proclaimed by scripture and the *regula fidei* in order to distinguish the Christian God from variant understandings of God circulating in rival groups claiming to possess the authentic understanding of scripture as secretly revealed to them by the apostles. As noted in the previous chapter, the Valentinians and the Marcionites claimed that the God revealed by the Christian writings was not the Creator of the cosmos or the God revealed in the Jewish scriptures, but a higher, supreme God unknown before Christ. Consequently, they did not believe that material creation was intended by the supreme God and, therefore, good; rather, they believed creation was the evil product of an ignorant, Demiurgic God. This ‘Demiurge’ had no connection to Christ; the Father of whom the Son speaks in the Gospels is the higher, unknown God.⁶² This theology severed the unified Godhead into two competing deities and subsequently removed Christians from their Jewish roots and their cherished scriptures. Thus, Irenaeus intends to demonstrate the oneness or unity of God, and he accomplishes his task by identifying the Most High God whom Christians worship with the Creator of the cosmos revealed in the Jewish scriptures.

As I noted in chapter one, Irenaeus’ opponents were adept at interpreting (or in Marcion’s case, excising) scripture passages that challenged their positions so as to remove any potential difficulty. Thus, Irenaeus does not begin his identifying task with scripture for his opponents simply would have dismissed any passage referring to God as Creator as irrelevant. In their understanding, such passages referred to the Demiurge. As a good rhetorician, Irenaeus knows that he has to establish the existence of one Creator God on premises upon which all parties could agree. Thus, his account of God’s identity in *Haer.* 2

61 Moreover, as I will show in the next chapter, the use of spatial language establishes a poor precedent for understanding God’s relationship to these intermediaries, particularly in their understanding of the Logos’ generation. See below pp. 107–17.

62 See above pp. 34–36.

commences with a logical argument for the existence of one Creator God and draws largely on the tools of logic and rhetoric.

Irenaeus opens his argument by showing the logical inconsistencies in the Valentinian description of the Most High God. First, he accepts as true the Valentinian title of the divine being as 'Fullness' (Πλήρωμα, *Pleroma*).⁶³ For Irenaeus, this title logically means that God contains everything in existence, whether created, as in material creation, or emanated, as in the Aeons, the existence of which he assumes at this point in the argument. Conversely, if anything exists outside of the 'Fullness,' then the name is proven false. Irenaeus writes, "For how can there be over [God] another Fullness or Principle or Power or another God since it is necessary that God, as the Fullness of all these things, in his immensity contains all things and is contained by none? But if there is anything outside of him, he is no longer the Fullness, nor does he contain all things."⁶⁴ Thus, despite the Valentinians' preference for 'Fullness' as a divine title, their understanding of material creation as inherently evil, and therefore not contained by the First Aeon, necessitates the existence of another being outside the Fullness who created the cosmos.⁶⁵

From this discrepancy—the divine being identified as the Fullness of all things and the presence of another divine being or power outside of him—Irenaeus first forms a *reductio ad absurdum* by claiming that if any god exists outside of the Fullness, then an infinite number of gods and spaces and fullnesses would exist.⁶⁶ Irenaeus contends that this view of reality amounts to

63 In Osborn's otherwise complete synopsis of the steps of this argument, he does not note that the Valentinians provided the beginning point of Irenaeus' argument with their insistence on 'Fullness' as the divine name. This fact, rather than a proposition about God, launches Irenaeus into his rhetorical argument. See Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 55–56. In my explanation of this argument, I will refer to the Valentinian *Pleroma* with its English translation 'Fullness' in order to stress the significance Irenaeus draws from the title for his argument.

64 *Haer.* 2.1.2.

65 *Haer.* 1.5.1.

66 "[I]f anything is outside the Fullness, the Fullness will be within the very thing that they say is outside the Fullness, and the Fullness will be contained by what is outside; but they understand also the First God to be within the Fullness—or the Fullness and what is outside of it are separated from each other by an immeasurable distance. Now if they accept this, then there will be a third something that immeasurably separates the Fullness from what is outside of it. This third something will be greater than the Fullness and what is outside of it, inasmuch as it will contain both within itself. And so, talk about what is contained and what contains would go on forever. For, if this third something would have a beginning in the things above it and an end in the things below it, it is entirely necessary that it be limited also on the sides, either beginning or ending at some other beings; and

an absurdity. Therefore, affirming that the divine title 'Fullness' means that the Most High God necessarily contains all things without remainder proves a more logical reality.

Whether the logic of the *reductio* argument stands, the inconsistency Irenaeus identifies in the Valentinian (and Marcionite) understanding of the Most High God becomes the foundation of his argument for it allows him *on the basis of his opponents' assumptions* to conclude logically that the Most High God must be the Creator. Irenaeus continues the argument: if God is truly the Fullness, as 'Fullness' is logically understood, then he must encompass all things, which, necessarily, includes material creation. If God contains material creation, then he must be the Creator of that material creation, since both Irenaeus and his opponents accepted God the Fullness as the supreme Power. If another power existing within the Fullness is the Creator of the cosmos, then this entity would be more powerful than the Most High God.⁶⁷ On the other hand, if the Most High God allows this power to create, then the material creation is ultimately due to the will of the Most High God and it becomes meaningless to attribute creation to another god.⁶⁸ Therefore, the Most High God alone logically must be the Creator without need of any intermediary Demiurge or angelic being.

Behind this logical argument stands an understanding of the divine identity similar to that witnessed in Theophilus' statement that the power of God lies precisely in his ability to create.⁶⁹ Irenaeus frames it as follows: if God is the supreme Power, then he must be the Creator of all things. And if the Most High God is the Creator, a need to posit the existence of other gods or divine emanations to account for the presence of the material world no longer remains. These logical conclusions regarding the identity of the divine being connect seamlessly to the God Irenaeus discerns in scripture, namely, the God who is one and who is the Creator of the cosmos. The scriptural proofs of *Haer.* 3–5 and *Epid.*, which largely consist simply of showing the numerous places where the New Testament works identify the Father of Jesus with the Creator God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, need not detain us because the crux of the argument, according to the dictates of the occasion of his work, lie in *Haer.* 2. As he

this would go on forever, so that their speculation would never come to a stop in the one God . . ." *Haer.* 2.1.3–4, ACW 65:18.

67 *Haer.* 2.2.1.

68 *Haer.* 2.1.3, 2.3.1–2, 2.4.1.

69 *Autol.* 2.4. Irenaeus will state this explicitly in a later passage where he writes, "The work of God, moreover, is the forming of humans." *Haer.* 5.15.2. I will return to this passage in more detail in later chapters.

proleptically notes following this logical argument, “That God is the Maker of the world is clear even to those people who talk against him in many ways, and they acknowledge him by calling him Maker, and styling him an Angel, without mentioning that all the Scriptures acclaim [him], and the Lord teaches this Father who is in heaven and not some other as we shall show in the course of this treatise.”⁷⁰ This passage serves as an apt transition into the second aspect of Irenaeus’ understanding of the identity of God, namely his identity as Father, a full understanding of which requires a brief departure from *Haer.* 2’s logical argument to consider the whole of his corpus.⁷¹

As noted above, the Apologists used the title ‘Father’ according to its Middle Platonic meaning, signifying God’s relation to the universe as its Creator, in order to further their arguments for God’s identity as Creator and to display the compatibility between the God proclaimed in the Jewish scriptures and the God proclaimed by the philosophers. By contrast, Irenaeus’ use of the title ‘Father’ has little to do with God’s creative work. Rather, in accordance with his understanding of scripture and the *regula*, Irenaeus uses ‘Father’ primarily to indicate the unique relationship between the First and Second Persons—the

70 *Haer.* 2.9.1, ACW 65:24 with minor revisions. For a summary statement of his argument from scripture, see *Haer.* 3.5.1.

71 Until very recently, studies of the notion of the Fatherhood of God in the Patristic era had been almost silent on the contribution of Irenaeus. This includes the works of the third trajectory. Barnes surprisingly is silent on the topic, despite its obvious Trinitarian ramifications, and Fantino does not see God’s Fatherhood as part of Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology. Fantino, *Théologie d’Irénée*, 300–305. More recently, Ladaria considers Irenaeus in the course of several other Ante-Nicene Fathers on the topic of God’s Fatherhood. Ladaria, “Tam Pater nemo,” 98–110. And Widdicombe conducted the most exhaustive study in his 2012 essay “Irenaeus and the Knowledge of God as Father,” in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 141–49. My argument aligns with much of Widdicombe’s conclusions, although it was developed independently. The primary difference between our treatments (as well as the earlier one by Ladaria) is that I draw more significant Trinitarian implications from the conclusions. (Widdicombe focuses more on the significance of the first appearance, post New Testament, of salvific adoption language.) The reason for this difference, I suspect, is that I see a more developed Trinitarian theology in Irenaeus’ thought in general, of which the Fatherhood of God is but one element. Widdicombe and Ladaria both fall into the first trajectory in their respective assessments of Irenaeus. See above p. 12n19. Any developed understanding of God’s Fatherhood in this trajectory is economic in nature and only offers a tantalizing glimpse of later, more developed Trinitarian theology. This conclusion, represented in both studies, lacks a compelling reason for the presence of Irenaeus’ developed thoughts on God’s Fatherhood. By contrast, the Trinitarian framework I draw out provides this reason.

Father and the Son—and, secondarily, to indicate the *potential*, salvific relationship between God and his creation as a result of the Son's revealing work.

Irenaeus indicates this alternate significance of 'Father' at the outset of *Haer.* 2 where he writes, "Moreover, that this God is the Father of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul said of him: 'There is one God the Father, who is over all and through all and in us all.'"⁷² The passage comes at the conclusion of Irenaeus' argument against his opponents' belief that a being other than the Most High God created the world.⁷³ The passage adds nothing to the logical argument, which concluded at *Haer.* 2.2.5, but serves instead to introduce or foreshadow the scriptural argument for the oneness of God that Irenaeus intends to develop in later books, wherein the focus is the intimate connection between the Creator God and Jesus Christ. Following the citation, Irenaeus returns to his rhetorical argument and offers no further interpretation of the passage here.

It is significant to note that the passage Irenaeus quotes in *Haer.* 2.2.6, Ephesians 4:6, does not link the title 'Father' to God's unique relationship with the Son, as Irenaeus' interpretation suggests. Neither does the passage, or the surrounding context, allude to Jesus. In fact, the verse arguably lends itself more to a Middle Platonist understanding—the reference to God's being "above all" easily could indicate his providential or creative functions. Thus, the only justification for Irenaeus' reference to the Son in his interpretation of the verse is the presence of the divine title 'Father.' The implication is that Irenaeus understands the divine title 'Father' itself to involve a connection or relationship to the Son Jesus Christ. In other words, the title 'Father' assumes the presence of a 'Son.' In his scriptural argument of later books, Irenaeus underscores this implication on the strength of passages such as Matthew 11:27 and uses the unique relationship to develop the Son's revelatory function.⁷⁴

Irenaeus believes that knowledge of the unique relationship between God and his Son, revealed in the divine title 'Father,' more completely exhausts God's identity than his role as Creator. In a *regula* statement in *Haer.* 1, Irenaeus shows a clear progression in the divine identity from Creator to Father. He writes, "This is he who made the world, indeed the world [which encompasses] all things; this is he who fashioned man; this is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob above whom is neither another God nor Beginning nor Power nor

⁷² *Haer.* 2.2.6.

⁷³ See Rousseau's helpful breakdown of the argument. Rousseau, SC 293:123–25.

⁷⁴ *Haer.* 4.6.7. I address this function of the Son below pp. 123–30, 142–45.

Fullness; this is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”⁷⁵ Although Irenaeus here distinguishes between the formation of the world and the formation of humanity in order to emphasize the special character of the latter, for my purposes this statement proclaims three truths regarding the divine identity. As indicated by the parallelism of the Latin translator, each truth increases in importance and progressive understanding from the former: (1) God is the one who created the cosmos; (2) God is the one who revealed himself to Israel; and, (3) God is the Father of Jesus Christ. The Apologists emphasize only the first two aspects of the divine identity, but for Irenaeus, God’s identity is not known fully apart from the knowledge that he is ‘Father’ of Jesus Christ.

Thus, Irenaeus maintains to know God fully is to know him in relationship with another divine being. This fact suggests a Trinitarian reality in Irenaeus’ understanding of God, namely, that in the one divine being called God, there exist two distinct personalities. This insight must await chapter three for further development. The point to stress in this context is that Irenaeus’ use of ‘Father,’ as opposed to the Apologists’ use of the same title, lends itself to this Trinitarian understanding.

Moreover, this knowledge of God’s Fatherhood not only entails knowledge of God’s unique relationship to Jesus Christ, those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ come to know God as their own, adoptive Father. Irenaeus writes, “For the Logos of God became a man, and He who is the Son of God became the Son of men to this end, [that man,] having been united with the Logos of God, and receiving adoption, might become a son of God.”⁷⁶ To know God as an adoptive Father, a person must first know the Son. Thus, for Irenaeus, prior to the incarnation of the Son, God was not fully known, precisely because he only was known as the Creator and not as the Father of Jesus Christ or as the adoptive Father of humanity. Only faith in the Son reveals this most intimate identity. He writes, “[He is] the God of all—both of the Jews and of the Gentiles and of the faithful. However, to the faithful He is as Father, since ‘in the last times’ He opened the testament of the adoption as sons . . .”⁷⁷ The failure of the Jews to know God as ‘Father,’ then, constitutes their primary error. Irenaeus writes, “the Jews have departed from God, because they have not

75 “[H]ic qui mundum fecit, etenim mundus ex omnibus; hic qui hominem plasmavit; hic Deus Abraham et Deus Isaac et Deus Iacob, super quem alius Deus non est neque Initium neque Virtus neque Pleroma; hic Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi . . .” *Haer.* 1.22.1.

76 *Haer.* 3.19.1. As an example of the prevalence of adoption language in Irenaeus’ works, see *Haer.* 2.28.3, 3.6.1–2, 3.16.3, 3.18.7, 3.20.2, 3.21.4, 4. *Pref.* 4, 4.1.1, 4.16.5, 4.36.2, 5.12.2, 5.32.2, *Epid.* 8.

77 *Epid.* 8, Behr, 44.

received his Logos, but have believed they were able to know God as Father by himself without the Logos, that is without the Son.”⁷⁸ For these reasons, Irenaeus, in contrast to the Apologists, never makes a rhetorical argument for God’s identity as ‘Father.’⁷⁹ Rather, as opposed to the knowledge of God as creator that may be perceived from his works, Irenaeus believes God as ‘Father’ is a revealed truth, not available to everyone on the premises of reason.⁸⁰

Finally, as the fullest revelation of God, the knowledge of God as adoptive Father is the identity of God to which all humanity is progressing toward. Irenaeus writes, “... for God is powerful in all things, even then having been seen prophetically through the Spirit, and also having been seen adoptively through the Son, but he will even be seen *paternally* in the Kingdom of heaven...”⁸¹ This is not to suggest that God’s nature will ever be fully known by humans, for as I will show momentarily, transcendence is a crucial component of Irenaeus’ understanding of the divine nature and the gulf between the Creator and the created will never be fully traversed, even in eternity.⁸² What this passage does suggest is that when God is seen in the fullness of which humans are capable, he will be seen precisely as a Father.

The only two scholars to explore Irenaeus’ understanding of divine ‘Fatherhood’ in significant detail, Ladaria and Widdicombe, both suggest that the Greek significance of the title ‘Father’ as universal Fatherhood—‘Father of all’—plays a bigger role in Irenaeus’ work than I have here allowed.⁸³ It is clear, as they note, that Irenaeus is aware of Plato’s, and by proxy the Middle

⁷⁸ *Haer.* 4.7.4.

⁷⁹ The Apologists all assume their readers could understand the Fatherhood of God through reason. For example, Athenagoras appeals to the emperors’ “great wisdom” in understanding the Son’s relationship to the Father (*Leg.* 10.3). Theophilus, despite his ire for the philosophers and his consistent claims of their errors, allows, in what is certainly a reference to *Tim.* 28c, that Plato knew God as Father (*Autol.* 2.4). If Irenaeus intended ‘Father’ in the Middle Platonic sense, he, like the Apologists, would have had no trouble arguing for this identity from reason.

⁸⁰ *Haer.* 2.6.1. Widdicombe underscores this point well. Widdicombe, “Irenaeus,” 143–45.

⁸¹ “... *potens est enim in omnibus Deus, visus quidem tunc per Spiritum prophetice, visus autem et per Filium adoptive, videbitur autem et in regno caelorum paternaliter...*” *Haer.* 4.20.5.

⁸² *Haer.* 2.28.3, 4.11.2.

⁸³ Ladaria claims this more clearly than Widdicombe. For Ladaria, Irenaeus’ understanding of Father simply develops Justin’s significance indicating God’s relationship to the whole world as its Creator. Ladaria, “Tam Pater nemo,” 98–99. Widdicombe notes the difference between Irenaeus and Justin on this point, but he sees more inconsistency in Irenaeus’ use and particularly, on the strength of *Haer.* 3.25.1, he believes Irenaeus allows that the Greeks can know God as Father. Widdicombe, “Irenaeus,” 141, 145. However, this

Platonists', use of 'Father' to name God, as he alludes to the *Tim.* 28c passage in the context of an anti-Marcionite polemic. He writes, "But because of this [God's providence], certain ones of the Gentiles, who were less of a slave to enticements and pleasures, and who were not led away to such a degree of superstition with regard to idols, because they were moved, although slightly, by His providence, *they were nevertheless convinced that they should call the Maker of this universe Father* because he exercises providence and arranges all things in our world."⁸⁴ Here, Irenaeus connects 'Father' to the divine action of providence in the manner of the Middle Platonists and the Apologists.

Nevertheless, although Irenaeus is aware of the philosophical use of 'Father' and considers it significant, he does not find in this usage an occasion to praise Greek philosophers, least of all Plato who Irenaeus already had criticized along with a catalog of other philosophers in *Haer.* 2.14.⁸⁵ Nor is it clear that he thinks the philosophers can know God as Father.⁸⁶ Were this the case, one would expect him to develop this line of argumentation in the manner of Justin, when in fact, he purposely drops it almost as soon as he makes the connection.

Irenaeus reprises the argument a few paragraphs after the allusion to *Tim.* 28c and mentions Plato by name in *Haer.* 3.25.5. Nevertheless, he does not quote *Tim.* 28c in the reprised argument. Here the burden of the argument of Plato's 'religiousness' over against Marcion falls not on the philosopher's use of 'Father' as a divine title but on his understanding of God's goodness. Irenaeus writes, "Plato is shown to be more religious than these men, since he acknowledged that the one and same God is both just and good and has power over all things, and even exercises judicial power . . . he shows the Maker and Framer of this world to be good. 'To the good,' he says, 'no jealousy ever arises with regard to anything.' By this he sets down God's goodness as the beginning and cause of the creation of the world . . ."⁸⁷ The Platonic passage linking God's goodness to his creative work that Irenaeus cites here is not *Tim.* 28c, but *Tim.* 29e, a passage in which 'Father' does not appear. Nor does Irenaeus refer

is a misreading of *Haer.* 3.25.1, as I will show presently. Irenaeus never deviates from his conviction that to know God as Father, one must know the Son.

84 *Haer.* 3.25.1, italics added. The Latin of the allusion is, "[T]amen conversi sunt ut dicerent Fabricatorem huius universitatis Patrem". The allusion to *Tim.* 28c is suggested by Irenaeus' combination of *Fabricator* and *Pater* which likely correspond to Δημιουργός and Πατήρ of the *Tim.* 28c passage. Unfortunately, no Greek fragment exists for this section. Rousseau's retroversion has Δημιουργός and Πατήρ in this passage. SC 211:479, 481.

85 *Haer.* 2.14.3–4. On this passage in relation to Irenaeus' views on Greek philosophy in general, see above pp. 39–41.

86 Against Widdicombe, "Irenaeus," 145.

87 *Haer.* 3.25.5, ACW 64:113 with minor revisions.

to Plato's use of 'Father' in his summary of the argument. Instead, he combines 'Maker' (*Fabricator*) with 'Framer' (*Factor*). If Irenaeus wanted to emphasize Plato's understanding of 'Father' in the manner of the Apologists, he either should have quoted *Tim.* 28c in this reprisal or at the very least alluded to the passage by pairing 'Maker' with 'Father' in his summary statement, as he did in the earlier passage. This omission demonstrates that although Irenaeus is aware of the precedent for 'Father' as a divine title in Plato's work, he has no interest in exploiting it. As I briefly suggested in the previous chapter, his interest is only in discrediting Marcion by showing his ignorance of God even when compared to the Greek philosophers whom Irenaeus otherwise regards as the source of all error. Both the philosophers' use of 'Father' and their understanding of God's goodness are effective for this argument.

Further Trinitarian implications of the significance of 'Fatherhood' Irenaeus develops will have to await my treatment of the Son, precisely because Irenaeus rarely speaks of God's Fatherhood apart from the Son. Therefore, no more needs to be said in this context. Having discussed Irenaeus' understanding of the identity of God, I turn now to his discussions regarding the nature of God, or of divinity itself, which requires a return to the logical argument of *Haer.* 2.

The Nature of God

Unlike the Apologists, Irenaeus expresses no interest in finding commonalities with Greek philosophy; therefore, he has little reason to define the divine nature in the straightforward manner witnessed, for example, in Athenagoras' *Leg.* 10. In fact, he views this speculative practice as potentially detrimental to a person's faith. Speculative thought regarding the nature of the divine drove the Valentinian protology myth and reiterated the folly of the philosophers.⁸⁸ Conversely, Irenaeus believes Christians should limit themselves to the knowledge revealed in scripture as interpreted through the *regula fidei* and not ponder the subjects on which scripture is silent.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, in the remainder of *Haer.* 2, Irenaeus engages in a series of critiques of the Valentinian theory of divine emanations or Aeons, and in the process he reveals several elements instructive to his understanding of the divine nature which come to bear on his Trinitarian theology.

Irenaeus—perhaps following Justin's teaching—understands transcendence as an essential aspect of the divine nature. For example, in a *regula* statement in *Epid.*, Irenaeus writes, "God, the Father, uncreated, uncontainable, invisible, one God, the Creator of all: this is the first article of our faith."⁹⁰

88 *Haer.* 2.14.1ff.

89 *Haer.* 2.28.2–3, 7.

90 *Epid.* 6, Behr, 43.

This list of negative attributes affirms the transcendence by contrasting the divine nature to that of material, which is created, contained, visible, and compound. In the same vein, the Valentinians affirm the divine transcendence in an effort to keep the Unknown Father untainted by the evil material creation. As was their custom, they did so using many of the same qualifiers as the church's doctrine used.⁹¹ Thus, according to his occasion and method of argumentation, Irenaeus' first task in defining the divine nature is to separate the church's understanding of divine transcendence from the Valentinian understanding.⁹² To understand Irenaeus' argument, it will be necessary to analyze the Valentinian understanding of divine transcendence.

As noted briefly in the previous chapter, the Valentinians maintained the divine transcendence through the positioning of 29 emanations or Aeons between the Most High God and the material creation.⁹³ The Aeons, by nature of their successive emanations from different Aeon pairs, who themselves emanated from the Most High God, or First Aeon, existed in a hierarchy of gradating divinity. As Barnes observes, the intervals between the Aeons are "the ontological basis (or expression of) the inferiority of each succeeding rank of super-celestial offspring: each degree of separation from the first cause produces offspring of diminished content and dignity compared to its antecedents."⁹⁴ Similarly, Denis Minns writes, "Fundamental to the concept of the [Valentinian] chain of being is the idea of a lessening or diminishing of whatever is communicated from one Aeon in the chain to the next."⁹⁵ The diminishing chain of being that constitutes the Valentinian *Pleroma*, thus, served to keep the Most High God who exists "in the invisible and indescribable

91 Compare, for example, Irenaeus' descriptions of the Valentinian Most High God in *Haer.* 1.1.1—"invisible and incomprehensible . . . eternal and unbegotten"—to the *regula* statement on the Christian God in *Epid.* 6 quoted just above.

92 Fantino insightfully observes that the crucial difference between the 'Gnostics' and Irenaeus are their different means of understanding the relation between God and the created world. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 263. This conclusion differs from other scholars who contend that Irenaeus and the 'Gnostics' are united in their understanding of God's transcendent relation to the world. Notably, Ochagavía, *Visibile Patris Filius*, 21, Joseph P. Smith, trans. and notes, *St. Irenaeus, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, ACW 16 (New York: Paulist Press, 1952), 24, and, most recently, Slusser, "The Heart of Irenaeus's Theology," in Foster and Parvis, *Irenaeus*, 133–39. As the following argument will demonstrate, I agree with Fantino over the latter scholars.

93 See above pp. 32–36.

94 Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 76.

95 Minns, *Irenaeus*, 39.

heights"⁹⁶ from contact with the inherently evil material creation by acting, in Rousseau's terminology, as a '*coupure*' or 'filter.'⁹⁷ The Aeons, who were themselves separated from each other by immense intervals kept the Most High God literally quite distant from the material world.⁹⁸

This reality is conceptualized in the Valentinian description of the hiddenness of the Most High God, even to those Aeons who are not material. Thus, only the Nous is able to contemplate fully the mystery of the Supreme God, precisely because, as the third emanation, it emanated directly from, and is positioned relatively close to, the First-Father.⁹⁹ The farther an emanation is positioned from the first source, as a result of its emanation order, the less knowledge it possesses of the Most High God until finally the last Aeon, Sophia, falls into error out of complete ignorance. As noted in chapter one, Sophia is restored to the *Pleroma*, but her passion is kept out and the material creation is literally separated from the subsequent material creation by the Aeon called, rather appropriately, 'Limit.'

Irenaeus' conception of the divine transcendence develops from a critique of this Valentinian understanding. For Irenaeus discerned that, despite their efforts to keep the Most High God separated from material creation, the Valentinians' spatial manner of defining transcendence actually *included* God with his emanations and the material creation in one continuum of being.¹⁰⁰ He draws this implication out, again, through a discussion of the Valentinian doctrine of the divine *Pleroma* or 'Fullness.' Although 'Fullness' is a title at times used for the First Aeon, it is alternately used collectively to refer to the first 30 Aeons.¹⁰¹ Thus, according to this understanding of Fullness in Valentinian teaching, the Most High God and his emanations of lesser divine natures together comprise the divine nature. This formula, Irenaeus claims, compromises the divine transcendence. He writes, "For the Father of all should not be counted with the other emissions, he who was not emitted with that which was emitted, the unborn with that which is born, and he whom no one comprehends with that which is comprehended by him . . . He who is without shape with that which has a definite shape. *For inasmuch as he is superior to the others*, he should not be numbered with them, he who is impassible and

96 *Haer.* 1.1.1.

97 Rousseau, SC 293:122.

98 *Haer.* 2.1.4.

99 *Haer.* 1.2.1.

100 See Minns' helpful discussion. Minns, *Irenaeus*, 41ff.

101 For example, see *Haer.* 1.1.3.

not in error with a passible Aeon endowed with error.”¹⁰² The logic of the emanation theory that produced Aeons of diminished divinity now contradicts a transcendent Most High God. For the Valentinians’ very ability to number God with these lesser beings implies that the divine transcendence is only a relative transcendence; God is indeed far away but is not completely different from the entities he produces, including the Aeon Sophia who was able to fall into error. Although Irenaeus leaves it unsaid here, his point is unmistakable—the Most High God is not completely different from the material creation which came from Sophia’s passion.

The reason Irenaeus rejects this manner of defining the divine transcendence is not because of some abstract, philosophical failure, but the more acute challenge that transcendence so conceived contradicts the God to whom the scriptures testify. For if the divine transcendence is defined by spatial distance, then the only means of keeping God separate from matter involves imagining him as remote, that is, as physically far removed from the affairs of humanity and beyond the knowledge of any being, as Valentinian theology bears out. On the contrary, scripture reveals a God who is intimately involved with humans. In fact, according to Irenaeus’ reading of scripture, God’s intimate involvement in the world, known by the term ‘economy’ (οἰκονομία), begins with the creation of humans, a fashioning with God’s “own hands,”¹⁰³ continues through a series of salvific covenants, the climax of which is the incarnation—God’s literal presence on earth—and culminates in their restoration in the Kingdom. God’s intimate actions with and among humans, thus, span the existence of the economy; Irenaeus believes that no human activity exists outside the reach of God’s providence, care, and love.

It may be asked at this point why Irenaeus does not simply drop the divine transcendence from his understanding. He does not provide insight here, except in those places where he notes his intention to simply pass on what has been handed to him.¹⁰⁴ As I have shown, the divine transcendence was part of the *regula fidei* and would have been a matter of first importance. Therefore, the divine transcendence could not be rejected, but rather, must be defined in a manner that allowed God to be present to his creation both in its formation and in all subsequent activities.

Irenaeus accomplishes this task by defining the divine transcendence as absolute rather than relative—for Irenaeus, God exists in a completely

¹⁰² *Haer.* 2.12.1, italics added.

¹⁰³ *Haer.* 4.20.1, *Epid.* 11.

¹⁰⁴ Among many examples, see *Haer.* 3.1.1.

different order of being than humanity and material creation.¹⁰⁵ This divine reality means that God is completely different and distinct from that which he creates. Thus, Irenaeus' ultimate response to his critique of the Valentinian numbering of the Most High God with his emanations comes in a passage that sharply distinguishes God and creation. Irenaeus writes, "For the Father of all is greatly different [*multum distat*] from those affections and passions which appear among men . . . For he is even beyond these and is therefore indescribable. For he may well and properly be called an understanding, capable of holding all things, but he is not like the understanding of men; and he may rightly be called light, but he is nothing like that light with which we are acquainted. So also in all other particulars, the Father of all will be not at all similar [*nulli similis*] to human weakness."¹⁰⁶ Unlike the Valentinian God, the God of scripture cannot be numbered with those beings he creates for he is "greatly different" from them.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Irenaeus maintains, God cannot even be described for description implies an inherent likeness.

105 The terminology of absolute and relative transcendence comes from Minns and offers a helpful way of noting the differences between Christian and 'Gnostic' theology. According to Minns, relative transcendence means "a matter of distance" whereas absolute transcendence indicates that "there is absolutely no continuity of being between God and creation." Minns, *Irenaeus*, 41–42. Richard A. Norris, Jr. has a similar understanding of Irenaeus' understanding of transcendence. Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology: A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen*, Studies in Patristic Thought (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 68–70. However, both scholars miss the connection between the spatial language of the Valentinians and that of the Apologists, as I will develop below. In a later article, Norris even wrongly claims that Irenaeus does imagine God spatially in one passage and therefore is inconsistent with this argument. Norris, "The Transcendence and Freedom of God: Irenaeus, the Greek Tradition, and Gnosticism," in Schoedel and Wilken, *Early Christian Literature*, 87–100. Nevertheless, the passage Norris identifies in support of his claim, *Haer.* 2.6.3, does not refer to Irenaeus' conception of God, but to the Valentinian Demiurge. Irenaeus' adoption of their spatial language in this instance is a rhetorical move. More importantly, neither Minns nor Norris make the Trinitarian connections I will develop from absolute transcendence in subsequent chapters.

106 *Haer.* 2.13.3–4.

107 The ANF's rendering of *multum distat* as "a vast distance" here specifically misses the argument's point of rejecting spatial imagery of God, a point to which I return in more detail below. See St. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, trans. A. Roberts and J.W.H. Rambaut, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1887, repr. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 1:374. Subsequent references to this translation of *Haer.* will be marked in the footnotes with ANF 1 and page number.

This passage explains Irenaeus' insistence that descriptions of God be limited to what is present in scripture, for humans are able to speak about and know God only because God has revealed himself in the Son out of his love. Parenthetically, we may note Irenaeus' clarity on the nature of theological language, a clarity absent from Apologetic theology. The language we use of God gives us insight into God, Irenaeus allows, but the reality that is God goes far beyond what we can conceive—"he may rightly be called light, but he is nothing like that light with which we are acquainted." Thus, Irenaeus underscores his point that God is not anything like creation and therefore cannot be numbered with humans for this methodology would imply a continuity of being between the Creator and created that Irenaeus everywhere rejects.¹⁰⁸

Irenaeus' only scriptural grounding for understanding transcendence as absolute occurs in Isaiah 55:8. In the midst of the argument, Irenaeus alludes to the passage when he writes, "Now, if they had known the Scriptures and had been taught by the Truth, they would indeed have known that God is not like men and women; and that his thoughts are not like the thoughts of men and women."¹⁰⁹ More often, Irenaeus argues for absolute transcendence on the basis of the philosophical argument of creation *ex nihilo*.

Irenaeus first engages the question of creation out of nothing as a polemic against his opponents whose teachings of coeternal divinity and matter threatened the transcendence of God. The Valentinians did not advance this belief as clearly as did the Middle Platonists, against whom Theophilus formulated the doctrine. Nonetheless, the Valentinian theory of the emanation of Aeons, the last of which emitted material creation through her passions, resulted in the loss of a definite starting point of matter and consequently, the loss of a clear distinction between God and matter. As Osborn notes, "[M]yths and philosophical accounts trace the origin of the world to an ultimate divine cause

108 In contrast, André Audet states that despite Irenaeus' emphasis on the complete otherness of God, an analogy of being between God and humans remains in his understanding, which allows humans to speak positively about God and to know God to some degree. Audet, "Orientations Théologiques," 48ff. Irenaeus would certainly grant that humans can speak positively about God and know him in a positive manner. Nevertheless, attributing the concept of analogy of being to Irenaeus is anachronistic and circumvents one of the central tenets of his understanding of the divine nature, namely, the strict distinction between the Creator and the created. As noted, Irenaeus thinks not in terms of analogy but in terms of revealed knowledge. Humans are able to speak about and know God to some degree only because God has revealed himself in the Son out of his love. Therefore, any analogies drawn from human experience to understand the being of God must be grounded in scripture.

109 *Haer.* 2.13.3, ACW 65:43.

from which, through intermediaries, the world emanates; this impairs the divine transcendence and the freedom of the divine act.”¹¹⁰ This formulation of the process of creation is, thus, a by-product of relative transcendence. On the contrary, absolute transcendence, as Irenaeus conceives, results in a clear moment of creation attributed only to the power and freedom of the transcendent God. Irenaeus writes, “To attribute the substance of the things that were created to the power and the will of the God of all things is credible and acceptable and stable. In this regard one might well say ‘What is impossible with mortals is possible with God.’ The reason for this is that men and women cannot make anything out of nothing, only out of matter that exists; God, however, *is far superior to humankind* inasmuch as he himself invented the matter of his work, since previously it did not exist.”¹¹¹ This clear moment of creation, which supports the distinction between the Creator and the created, is the basis for the qualitative difference in being Irenaeus perceives.

Although Irenaeus is anticipated in this argument by Theophilus, some scholars have noted a difference between the two.¹¹² Namely, Theophilus envisions creation occurring in two phases with God first creating unformed matter and then, in a second phase, giving form to the matter, as suggested by the description of the earth as ‘formless’ in Genesis 1:2.¹¹³ Despite this plausible understanding of scripture, for Irenaeus the notion of unformed matter, in Steenberg’s words, “smacks too strongly of Valentinian influence.”¹¹⁴ Thus, Irenaeus never speaks of unformed matter and instead asserts that creation occurs in only one phase. When God creates, he creates things (πράγματα), or actual living beings—humans. Irenaeus writes, “But we will not be wrong saying the same thing also of the substance of matter [*substantia materiae*] since God produced it; for we have learned from the scriptures that God has supremacy over all things.”¹¹⁵ Here, the ambiguous phrase ‘substance of matter’ is clarified with the word ‘things.’ Steenberg’s analysis is compelling. He writes, “For God to create out of nothing is for him to create the actual, individualized

¹¹⁰ Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 71.

¹¹¹ *Haer.* 2.10.4, ACW 65:36–37, italics added. The scriptural quotation comes from Luke 18:27. On this point, see also *Haer.* 2.28.7, 2.30.9.

¹¹² For this argument, see Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 309–12, 316–17, Fantino, “Théologie de la Création,” 128–29, Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 51–61, 69–73, and, most recently, Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 46ff.

¹¹³ “These are the first teachings which the divine scripture gives. It indicates that the matter [ὑλη] from which God made and fashioned the world was in a way created, having been made by God.” *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 41.

¹¹⁴ Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 46.

¹¹⁵ *Haer.* 2.28.7.

entities of the cosmos from a state of non-existence. It is specifically to say that the substance of the being of each existing entity has been called into existence from a state of nothingness, of non-being.”¹¹⁶ This clarification of creation *ex nihilo* will become particularly important in assessing the creative function of the Logos, which must await next chapter.¹¹⁷

As is often noted, this distinction between Creator and creature, first established in this polemic, subsequently becomes one of the central points of Irenaeus’ theological vision worked out in later books of *Haer.*¹¹⁸ In perhaps the clearest expression of this thesis, Irenaeus writes, “And in this God differs from man, since God indeed makes, but man is made. And indeed he who makes is always the same, but what is made must receive both a beginning and a middle, as well as an addition and an increase.”¹¹⁹ The distinction grounds his anthropology, particularly the well-known belief that Adam and Eve are created innocent but not perfect precisely because they are creatures and have a lot of growing up to do.¹²⁰ Moreover, it grounds his understanding of the nature of salvation which is precisely a development of human creatures from immature beings to godlike beings—the fact that they can change is proper to their creatureliness.¹²¹

These issues have been well traversed by past Irenaeian scholars. What is of interest to the present work, of course, is the Trinitarian realities such a conception implies. As these realities mostly pertain to the natures of the Son and Spirit, they will be developed more fully in later chapters. Nevertheless, several points related to the divine transcendence may be said in this context to prepare for those later discussions. First, when transcendence is defined by quality rather than spatial distance, the divine transcendence remains regardless of the presence of material creation in the divine. Consequently, Irenaeus affirms without equivocation that all things are *in* God as the Fullness and as the one who contains all things, without reversion to Stoic materialism. Although God contains material creation, his absolute transcendence keeps him from mixing with material. Second, Irenaeus’ understanding of God as the Fullness of all things, maintained through an absolute transcendence, allows him to posit nothing between God and his creation—no ‘filter’ which hides God from humanity. Even Adam, although cast out of Eden for his sin, does not leave the

¹¹⁶ Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 48.

¹¹⁷ See below pp. 119–23.

¹¹⁸ For example, Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 339–47 and Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:549–50.

¹¹⁹ *Haer.* 4.11.2.

¹²⁰ *Haer.* 3.23.5, *Epid.* 12 and 14.

¹²¹ See, among others, Osborn, *Irenaeus*, ch. 10 and Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, part 3.

Fullness of God. Irenaeus writes, “For at no time did Adam escape the hands of God . . .”¹²² Material and sinful humanity need not be cast outside God’s presence, as with Valentinian theology, not only because logically no place exists outside of God’s Fullness for them to be cast,¹²³ but also because the divine transcendence, when defined absolutely, cannot be corrupted. These realities of Irenaeus’ thought directly affect his understanding of the nature of the Son and Spirit in their roles in the economy.

Although it is not a sequential argument, Irenaeus’ understanding of transcendence as absolute logically grounds, moreover, what he can say positively of the divine nature. We have already seen this with his use of negative attributes—whatever material creation is, God is not. The positive way of stating this reality, which is the only positive description of the divine nature Irenaeus offers that is not directly supported by scripture, is that the divine nature is simple. Per the method of *Haer.* 2, the argument for divine simplicity is worked out in contradiction to the Valentinian understanding. Irenaeus asserts that the Valentinian *Pleroma*, which, as noted, included not only the Most High God but also all of the Aeons emanating from him, logically resulted in a compound divine nature—God composed as parts. This fact is manifested in the titles given to the various, spatially separated, Aeons, including Ἐννοια (Idea or Thought), Νοῦς (Mind), Ἀλήθεια (Truth), Λόγος (Reason), and Σοφία (Wisdom).¹²⁴ According to Irenaeus’ report of Valentinian doctrine, these Aeons are not qualities of God or attributes existing in his mind; rather, they are distinct entities, products of the First Aeon. The inevitable result, Irenaeus discerns, is a separated and compound divine being. Irenaeus writes, “For if [God] emitted Mind, then he who emitted Mind, according to them, is understood as compound and corporeal, so that God who emitted indeed is separate from the Mind which is emitted.”¹²⁵ In this definition, Irenaeus shows acquaintance

122 *Haer.* 5.1.3. Irenaeus interprets God’s removal of Adam from Eden in Gen. 3 not as a loss of the presence of God, but as a loss of eternal life, a result which itself is interpreted as a merciful act. That God imposed death on Adam put a limit on sin and necessarily meant that he would not have to persevere in sin forever (*Haer.* 3.23.6). Irenaeus writes this passage not to elucidate the closeness of God but to indicate that the God who saved humanity is the same God who created. Nevertheless, although originally not made in favor of the argument of *Haer.* 2, the image works in this context insofar as it reveals little reticence on Irenaeus’ part to speak of the intimate connection between God and created material—even, in this case, between God and sinful humanity.

123 See *Haer.* 2.1.3–5, 4.19.2.

124 For the full list of 30 Aeons, as well as their order of emanation, see *Haer.* 1.1.1–3.

125 “*Si enim Sensum emisit, ipse qui emisit Sensum secundum eos compositus et corporalis intellegitur, ut sit separatim quidem qui emisit Deus, separatism autem qui emissus est Sensus.*” *Haer.* 2.13.5.

with and acceptance of a philosophical commonplace that a compound being is necessarily created; divine, uncreated beings are simple and without parts.¹²⁶

Therefore, in contrast to the Valentinian understanding, Irenaeus affirms God's simplicity. He writes, "[God is] simple and not compound, with similar members, and is wholly similar and equal to himself, since He is wholly mind, and wholly spirit, and wholly thought, and wholly intelligence, and wholly reason, and wholly hearing, and wholly seeing, and wholly light and the whole fount of all good things..."¹²⁷ This definition of the simple divine nature is logically related to Irenaeus' previous argument that the Most High God as the Fullness of all things is necessarily the Creator. By removing the Valentinian intermediaries, he effectively equates these powers (Nous, Logos, etc.) with God, himself. Elsewhere, he writes, "... in the God who is above all things, and who is wholly Mind and wholly Logos, as we have said, an emission with the type of order mentioned cannot exist, since he does not have in himself anything that is more ancient or of later origin, nor does he have in himself anything that belongs to another. Moreover, he continues to be absolutely equal and similar and one."¹²⁸ In this passage, Irenaeus refers these appellations to the Father as opposed to other passages where 'Logos' is a clear title for the Son. Nonetheless, Irenaeus is not confused or inconsistent in his use of Logos terminology. Rather, the use of 'Logos' here as an appellation of the Father establishes a key truth upon which Irenaeus will later draw to argue for the full divinity of the Son; namely, the divine nature is Logos itself.¹²⁹

Some scholars have noted a possible philosophical source of this divine simplicity formulation, and I have noted the philosophical commonplace of a

126 Plato made a similar argument against a compound understanding of the One in *Parm.* 137. The *Didask.*, taking a somewhat different approach, but also in line with Irenaeus' emphasis on the divine simplicity, states, "God is partless, by reason of the fact that there is nothing prior to him. For the part, and that out of which a thing is composed, exists prior to that of which it is a part..." *Didask.* 10.7, Dillon, 19.

127 "... *simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibimetipsi similis et aequalis est, totus cum sit sensus et totus spiritus et totus sensuabilitas et totus ennoia et totus ratio et totus auditus et totus oculus et totus lumen et totus fons omnium bonorum...*" *Haer.* 2.13.3. See *Haer.* 1.15.5, 1.16.3, 2.28.4–5 and 4.11.2, the latter of which puts this aspect of God in direct contrast to created humans.

128 "... *in eo autem qui sit super omnes Deus, totus Nus et totus Logos cum sit, quemadmodum praediximus, et neque aliud antiquius, neque posterius aut (nec) alterius habente in se, sed toto aequali et simili et uno perseverante, iam non talis huius ordinationis sequetur emission.*" *Haer.* 2.13.8, ACW 65:45 with minor revisions. In this difficult text, I follow Unger's lucid translation, which follows Grabe, over Rousseau, by replacing *anterius* with *alterius*. See his notes, *Against the Heresies, Book 2*, 131–32.

129 See below, pp. 142–45.

compound nature necessarily being a quality of created being.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, it is important to note a more proximate and therefore likely source of the idea of a simple divine nature, namely, the traditional Jewish emphasis on monotheism inherited by the early Christians. Put simply, the belief that God is one translates, in an anti-Valentinian polemic, to God is simple. To be sure, Jewish monotheism likely was not as strict in this period as was once thought.¹³¹ However, what is clear in both Judaism and early Christianity is a distinction, as one Philonic scholar puts it, “between the first cause and the various beings that make up the material cosmos, even the most perfect among them such as the heavenly bodies.”¹³² This distinction renders the first cause one, variously called unique or simple, and it is this distinction from which the Valentinians deviated in their theory of semi-divine emanations.

More to the point, the emphasis on the divine nature’s simplicity or uniqueness was present in the Apologists’ theology as well, specifically in contexts where they attempted to align the philosophical understanding with the Jewish monotheistic emphasis. Furthermore, the Irenaeus’ formulations of divine simplicity find a particular parallel in a passage by that most Jewish of apologists, Theophilus, when he writes, “if I call Him Logos, I speak of him as first principle; if I call him Nous, I speak of his Thought; if I call him Spirit, I speak of His breath . . .”¹³³ Moreover, Irenaeus’ several recitations of the *regula*

130 For example, many scholars note a possible connection to the pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes to whom is attributed the following phrase: “All of him [God] sees, all thinks, and all hears” (as quoted in Grant, *Irenaeus*, 44). See also Norris, “Transcendence and Freedom,” in Schoedel and Wilken, *Early Christian Literature*, 96, Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 36–38, and Schoedel, “Enclosing, Not Enclosed,” in Schoedel and Wilken, *Early Christian Literature*, 77.

131 Recent research in Second Temple Judaism has revealed the presence of another power or powers alongside the Most High God who also have some role in his sovereign rule and/or creation. See, for example, Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), Larry W. Hurtado, “First Century Jewish Monotheism,” *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3–26, and Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1998), esp. chs. 2 and 3. While noting these categories as helpful to early Christians in coming to terms with Jesus’ ministry, Hurtado more so than Segal, emphasizes that monotheism remains in the Second Temple Jewish texts and, thus, early Christian thought is unprecedented in respect to its christological formulations.

132 Cristina Termini, “Philo’s Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. and trans. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95–123.

133 *Autol.* 1.3. As noted in chapter one, I accept Briggman’s thesis of the relationship between Theophilus and Irenaeus, which states that Irenaeus does not read Theophilus until

invariably begin with an affirmation that there is “one God” as opposed to the 30 Aeons that constitute the Valentinian Fullness. These recitations offer another, more traditional and less polemical, means of affirming the simplicity of the divine nature.¹³⁴ Regardless of the source, the divine simplicity connects with and supports all that Irenaeus has thus far affirmed about both the identity of God and the nature of God. As a simple being, he is the one Creator God who is not separated from his creation by a series of intermediate, ontologically gradated divine beings.

Both the negative description of the divine transcendence as absolute and the positive description of the divine nature as simple result in a manner of speaking about God that more clearly rejects the Valentinian implications than the ambiguous language of the Apologists. Namely, Irenaeus categorically rejects all spatial language and imagery of God. As Fullness, God cannot be thought of as occupying a certain, far away place; rather, he is the place of all other things—everything in the cosmos exists fully within him. Irenaeus writes, “[I]t is necessary for God as the Fullness of all these things to contain all things without limit and to be contained by no one . . .”¹³⁵ Moreover, as a simple being, God cannot be thought of as a being *out of which* other things emanate. Irenaeus asks rhetorically of an emission, “And to where and from where was [the Mind] emitted? For whatever is sent forth from any place, passes of necessity into some other.”¹³⁶ When he creates the cosmos or when he generates the Logos (as we will see more fully in the next chapter), these entities necessarily remain in him because he is the Fullness of all things. The formula of ‘containing, not contained,’ which runs like a refrain throughout *Haer.*,¹³⁷ is not an example of a reversion to spatial images,¹³⁸ however, because Irenaeus has logically already rejected the premises on which this image could be literal. Rather, it is a traditional and metaphorical way of expressing the closeness

sometime in the midst of writing *Haer.* 3. As such, the parallel I underscore here is not the result of direct influence, but rather suggests that both Theophilus and Irenaeus were influenced by common sources or common currents of thought.

134 See *Haer.* 1.10.1.

135 *Haer.* 2.1.2.

136 *Haer.* 2.13.5.

137 *Haer.* 1.15.5, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.6.1, 2.30.9, 4.3.1, 4.20.1–2.

138 Against Schoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology,” 99–100. Schoedel’s contention that Irenaeus’ ‘containing, not contained’ phrase is literal imagery that suggests Irenaeus, like the Valentinians, imagines God to be spatially located fails to account for the substance of *Haer.* 2’s argument which specifically rejects such a claim. When the entirety of this argument is taken into account, it becomes impossible to take this language literally.

between God and humanity.¹³⁹ As noted, the Apologists also likely intended such phrases as metaphorical but their liberal use of spatial imagery, as with their understanding of transcendence, confuses the matter. No such confusion exists in Irenaeus' writings.

The concept which ultimately supports Irenaeus' entire understanding of the divine nature—absolute transcendence, a simple divine nature, and the absence of spatial categories to describe the divine nature—is the ancient, revealed truth that God is spirit.¹⁴⁰ This concept is so fundamental to his understanding of the divine nature that its denial constitutes a “fall into the greatest blasphemy . . .”¹⁴¹ Therefore, I agree with Barnes that ‘spirit’ is “the single most important concept for understanding Irenaeus's Trinitarian theology.”¹⁴² Spirit establishes the logic within which Irenaeus will define the key components of his Trinitarian theology. In the context of his understanding of the First Person, Irenaeus' emphasis on God's spiritual nature allows him to affirm both God's transcendence and God's involvement with humanity, apart from the tension discerned in the Apologists' thought. As spirit, God exists in a different category of being than corporeal humanity; his simple nature contrasts with the compound nature of humanity. Nonetheless, no spatial distance exists between him and his creation, for all things that come from him remain in him and are contained in him as the Fullness. The spiritual nature of God allows this containment to be conceived apart from spatial imagery. If all of creation is always in God the ‘Fullness,’ then from the human perspective, God is always ‘close.’

Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the Apologists' and Irenaeus' respective understandings regarding the identity and nature of God the Father. Although no specifically Trinitarian texts have yet been studied, this chapter has revealed

139 The same could be said for those few places where Irenaeus speaks of God as ‘above’ all things.

140 John 4:24.

141 *Haer.* 2.13.7.

142 Barnes, “Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology,” 76. MacKenzie hinted at the importance of this concept for Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology, but he fails to develop the idea to any significant degree. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration*, 81–84. Fantino's lack of acknowledgement of this aspect of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology constitutes one of the primary weaknesses of his account and stems from his method of focusing on the economy.

key differences between the Apologists' and Irenaeus' respective formulations of the divine nature that serve as the basis for their differences in more specifically Trinitarian contexts. Both the Apologists and Irenaeus understand God as the only God who created the cosmos and who was revealed in the Jewish scriptures. Irenaeus extends this identity to include Fatherhood, meaning that knowing God fully entails knowing him as the Father of Jesus Christ. Both the Apologists and Irenaeus understand God as transcendent and removed or separated from matter. Irenaeus maintains this transcendence in such a manner that allows God to remain intimately involved in the affairs of his creation. He does this by redefining transcendence from relative to absolute, avoiding any spatial understanding of God and keeping his language and imagery consistent with the spiritual nature of God. As a result, as God is spirit, God can be the Fullness of all things.

With the exception of the Trinitarian potential inherent in Irenaeus' understanding of God as 'Father,' there is not much to note regarding Irenaeus' theology in comparison to the Apologists' theology. As I noted in the previous section, the language of the Apologists is too ambiguous to conclude that they are arguing anything substantially different from Irenaeus in regards to the divine nature. What is clear, however, is that their use of spatial language to describe the divine transcendence, even if it was used metaphorically, was inadequate to meet the challenges posed by the Valentinians. This explains why Irenaeus departs from Justin at this point in his argument. Moreover the Apologists' spatial language does create a logic that, as I noted briefly, will necessitate a diminished nature to the Son and Spirit, one that is not alleviated by their use of the divine title 'Father.' Irenaeus is absent of any such logic and it will bear much Trinitarian fruit when he turns to describe the respective natures of the Son/Logos and Spirit/Wisdom. To these discussions I now turn.

The Logos of God

In this chapter, I turn to the Apologists' and Irenaeus' respective understandings of the nature of the Second Person. This inquiry will consist of two parts. The first part features a general survey of the Logos theology operative in their works. Here I will focus solely on the work of the Logos in the economy prior to his incarnation.¹ The second part will analyze the manner in which each figure

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- 1 Works abound addressing the work of the Logos/Son in his incarnate state in Irenaeus' thought. Prominent examples include Andia, *Homo Vivens*, Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, Houssiau, *Christologie*, Osborn, *Irenaeus*, and Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*. Conversely, the pre-incarnational work of the Logos is underrepresented in scholarship. I do not disagree with the majority of Irenaeian scholars that the incarnate work of the Logos/Son is the central tenet of Irenaeus' theology. Nevertheless, I will limit my treatment in this chapter to the pre-incarnational work of the Logos/Son for several reasons. First, the pre-incarnational work of the Logos lies within the limited space of the present study. Second, the Trinitarian insights present in Irenaeus' understanding of the incarnate Logos do not differ substantially from those of the pre-incarnational work of the Logos. Finally, as two of the three apologists in this comparative study say nothing of the work of the Logos in his incarnate state, only Irenaeus' understanding of the Logos' pre-incarnational work offers the comparison crucial to my methodology. I will address certain aspects of the work of the Logos in the incarnation in chapter five. On a different note, the restrictions of the scope of the present chapter's inquiry allow me to focus on the christological title 'Logos,' as this title represents Irenaeus' primary means of referring to the Second Person in his pre-incarnational state, whereas, for example the title 'Son' (Υἱός), is more often used of the Second Person in his incarnate state. See Houssiau, *Christologie*, 28–31 for a similar approach. Although methodologically helpful, stressing the distinction of titles such as 'Logos' and 'Son' risks overshadowing Irenaeus' emphasis on the unity of the Second Person and the Second Person's work in all stages of the economy. As Fantino has shown, the unity of the pre-incarnate Logos and incarnate Son is central to Irenaeus' anti-'Gnostic' argument (the 'Gnostics' assumed the reality of a heavenly Logos separate from the earthly Logos), regardless of his preference of titles at different stages of the economy. He writes that for Irenaeus, "the Word *is* the Son of the Father." Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 285, italics added. This means, among other things, that God does not become a Father at some point in the same way that the Logos/Son does not become distinguishable only at some point, as this chapter will bear out. Indeed, the most accurate means of referring to Irenaeus' understanding of the Second Person is 'Logos/Son' regardless of the stage of the economy. Thus, although I will stress the distinction in titles to focus on Irenaeus' Logos theology, I will, at times, address these figures' use of the divine title 'Son' both as it illumines an aspect of their respective Logos theologies and, in the case of Irenaeus, to emphasize the unity of the Second Person in all stages of the economy. The

understands the generation of the Logos. The generation as a particular topic of study within the more general Logos theology is appropriate here because it is the decisive topic for understanding the eternal relationship of the Logos to God, and in turn, the nature of the Logos, and because it is the area where Irenaeus most clearly departs from the Logos theology of the Apologists.² I will argue that the Apologists largely follow Middle Platonic logic in their understanding of the work of the Logos, exemplified by his generation, which results in a diminished divinity of the Logos/Son. Conversely, Irenaeus rejects the logic inherent to the Apologists' Logos theology by arguing for the eternal distinctness of the Logos/Son, which is, likewise, exemplified by Irenaeus' understanding of the Logos' generation.³

The Apologists

Logos Theology

The Apologists' intention to correlate Christian belief with Greek philosophy explains their preference for the title 'Logos' (Λόγος) when referring to the pre-existent being identified both explicitly and implicitly with the earthly figure Jesus of Nazareth.⁴ By the mid-second century, Logos had become standard parlance among various philosophical groups referring to a cosmic

reader should note that the pronouns with which I refer to the Logos will change according to the state of the personhood of the Logos. In general, when referring to the Middle Platonic Logos, I use 'it' and when referring to Irenaeus' Logos, I use 'he.' With the Apologists' Logos, the pronoun will vary according to the Logos' stage of existence. The reason for this apparent inconsistency will become clear through the course of this chapter.

- 2 Admittedly, the order in which I address these topics seems juxtaposed. I intentionally have chosen this order to be faithful to these figures' respective theologies. As I will show momentarily, none of them address the generation for its own sake but rather to support the work of the Logos.
- 3 Parts of this chapter appear in my essay "Irenaeus as Logos theologian," *VC* 66 (2012), 341–61.
- 4 Justin uses Λόγος as a title of the Second Person 55 times, the majority (44) coming in the *Apologies*. Athenagoras employs Λόγος 12 times and Theophilus employs the title 27 times. These figures are illuminating when compared to the uses of other common christological titles such as Υἱός, Ἰησοῦς, or Χριστός. Neither Athenagoras nor Theophilus use the titles Ἰησοῦς or Χριστός to refer to the Second Person. (Theophilus intentionally avoids Χριστός as suggested by his claim that the name 'Christian' comes not from a person's status as a follower of Christ but from the fact that they are "anointed with the oil of God" [*Autol.* 1.12].) Theophilus uses Υἱός only once in connection with a quotation from the fourth Gospel (*Autol.* 2.22). Athenagoras uses Υἱός 14 times, more than he uses Λόγος. Nonetheless, this discrepancy is due to several repetitive uses of Υἱός—in actuality, he only uses Υἱός as a title for

and pervasive, semi-divine force or being at work in the universe. Its provenance is in Stoicism where it described both the governing faculty of the human and the pervasive, divine force that created the material world, was immanent within it, and imposed order on it.⁵ In Middle Platonism, this latter meaning is assumed and becomes the term for Plato's all-pervasive World Soul as described in the *Tim.*⁶ As recent scholarship has argued, Logos theology also has precedent within some strands of Jewish theology, in particular with the Jewish emphasis on the Word of God as above the angels and below the Creator.⁷ Thus, to explain Jesus of Nazareth in terms of the Logos served to connect Christianity with a number of ancient and honored philosophical and religious traditions. And although the Apologists were not the first Christians to use Λόγος as a title for Jesus,⁸ the meaning they accorded this title profoundly influenced all subsequent Logos theologies.⁹

The Logos theology of the Apologists not only offered a means of correlating Christian belief with Greek philosophy, it alleviated a difficulty raised by the Apologists' understanding of the divine nature. As noted last chapter, the Apologists spoke of God primarily in terms of a unique, uncreated, transcendent being who, consequently, was unable to appear in and work in material creation (the Apologists' spatial language conceptualized this

the Second Person at four separate points in his argument (*Leg.* 10, 12, 18, and 24). Significantly, Athenagoras never uses Υἱός apart from Λόγος, although he uses Λόγος apart from Υἱός in three places (*Leg.* 4, 6, and 30). Athenagoras always equates and explains Υἱός according to the philosophical meaning of Λόγος (e.g., *Leg.* 10.3). Justin does use Ἰησοῦς and Χριστός as titles for the Second Person, although rarely in the Second Person's pre-incarnational state. Justin uses Υἱός as a title of the pre-existent being some 82 times, although 25 of these uses are quotations from scripture, and several more come in the exegesis of those same passages. Despite his openness to the use of these other christological titles, his preferred title for the Second Person in his pre-incarnational state is Λόγος.

5 A.A. Long, "Stoic psychology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 560–84.

6 Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 45–49.

7 Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *J ECS* 3, no. 3 (1995): 261–80 and Hurtado, *One God*, 44–50.

8 This distinction belongs to the writer of the fourth Gospel, who claimed that the Logos was in the beginning with God and that all things were created through the Logos (John 1:1–3), statements with which Theophilus, and likely Justin, were familiar (only the former explicitly cites the Johannine passage). Ignatius of Antioch also used Λόγος once to refer to the Son in *Magn.* 8.2.

9 On this point, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic age to Chalcedon* (451), trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 108–13.

understanding—because God exists in his super-celestial place, he could not enter the place of the world). The challenge this definition produced was whether and in what manner such a transcendent and distant God could be reconciled with the creative and active God revealed in the scriptures.¹⁰ Logos theology provided the answer—the Logos, like the Stoic Logos or the Platonic World Soul, becomes in the Apologists' thought the active force or agent of the transcendent God in the material world. Leslie Barnard captures well the significance of Logos theology governed by this logic. He writes, "Justin retained the Middle Platonist emphasis on God as the unknowable and transcendent Cause far removed from the world and disconnected with it . . . His doctrine of the Logos . . . in fact kept the supreme Deity at a safe distance from intercourse with men and left the Platonic transcendence in all its bareness."¹¹

The Apologists manifest their understanding of the Logos as the active force of the transcendent God through a pervasive insistence that God does not create without mediation; rather, God creates through the agent or medium of the Logos. Justin writes, "But his [God's] Son, who alone is called Son in the proper sense, the Logos who, before all the things which were made, was both with him and was begotten when at the beginning he made and ordered all things through him . . ."¹² Commenting on the creation account in Genesis 1, on two occasions Justin notes the significance of God's creating with a word and links this speech to the person of the Logos (1 *Apol.* 59.2–5, 64.5). In the second occasion, he identifies the Logos of God with the Greek Logos through a familiar mythological story when he writes, "[S]ince [the philosophers] knew that God conceived and made the world through the Logos, they spoke of Athena as the first thought . . ."¹³

In the *Dial.*, Justin uses the language of *ἀρχή* to express the same truth. For example, he writes that the Logos "was begotten both as a beginning [*ἀρχή*] before all his works, and as the offspring from God."¹⁴ Justin's use of *ἀρχή* as a description of the creative work of the Logos likely is indebted to the long philosophical tradition behind *ἀρχή*. In various philosophical schools, *ἀρχή*

10 This difficulty is often referred to as the 'cosmological problem' and long has been recognized by scholars as one of the primary reasons for the presence of Logos theology in Apologetic theology. For discussions representative of twentieth century scholarship, see Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 88–91 and Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 345ff.

11 Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 83–84.

12 2 *Apol.* 6.3. See also 1 *Apol.* 59.5, 64.5, *Dial.* 61.3 (in conjunction with a quotation of Prov. 8:21ff), 84.2.

13 1 *Apol.* 64.5, ACW 56:69–70 with minor revisions.

14 *Dial.* 62.4. See also *Dial.* 61.1.

referred to ‘principle’ or ‘cause’ and was central to the philosophical discussions of the origins of the world.¹⁵ Ἀρχή is used first in the sense of ‘principle’ in the pre-Socratic philosophers where it was identified with the elements, from which all material derives. In Plato’s *Tim.*, it has a general sense of ‘cause’ and specifically is equated with ‘cause’ in connection to the Cause of the universe in *Tim.* 28b. For the Middle Platonists, following Plato, ἀρχή again refers to ‘principle,’ of which three are generally listed, namely matter, the forms, and God.¹⁶ Alternately, Justin might have been drawn to the concept because of its appearance in connection with the personified figure of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22ff who says, “The Lord created me at the beginning [ἀρχήν] of his work.” References to a personified agent, called ‘Wisdom,’ who was present with God before the world, are prevalent in the Jewish Wisdom literature.¹⁷ This interpretation seems likely as Justin alludes to the Proverbs passage in *Dial* 62.4 by both referring to Solomon and calling the Son ‘Wisdom.’ Regardless of the source of his use of ἀρχή, the outcome is the same, namely, God created through an active intermediary force, which allowed him to remain in an impassible, transcendent state, detached from the material world.

In his definition of the nature of God, which I discussed in the previous chapter, Athenagoras follows affirmations of God’s transcendent nature with the statement that God “created, adorned, and now rules the universe through the Logos that is from him.”¹⁸ Another Athenagoran statement in the same vein closely parallels John 1:3. Athenagoras writes, “. . . since to him [the Logos] and through him all things came into existence . . .”¹⁹ Nevertheless, Athenagoras does not refer to John; the only scriptural source he identifies to support the mediatory, creative work of the Logos is, like Justin, Proverbs 8:22.²⁰

15 See the helpful discussions by J.C.M. Van Winden in “In the Beginning: Some Observations on the Patristic Interpretations of Genesis 1, 1” in *Arche: A Collection of Patristic Studies by J.C.M. Van Winden*, ed. J. den Boeft and D.T. Runia (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 61–77.

16 *Didask.* 8–10. Ἀρχή may have meant something similar in Valentinianism as well, for according to Irenaeus, the first Aeon is described as the Προαρχή, or the ‘First-Beginning’ while the third Aeon emitted from the First-Father, principally called Νοῦς, is also called Αρχή. *Haer.* 1.1.1. Both names indicate a beginning principle.

17 For example, see Ps. [LXX] 103:24, Prov. 3:19, Wisd. 7:22, 9:2, 9:9, Sir. 1:4, 24:9, 33:7–9. On the trope of the work of Wisdom in Second Temple Jewish literature, see James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 44–45 and Hurtado, *One God*, 42–44.

18 *Leg.* 10.1. The same doctrine appears in *Leg.* 4.2, 6.2, and 10.5.

19 *Leg.* 10.2. Compare the δι’ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο of *Leg.* 10.2 with the πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο of John 1:3.

20 *Leg.* 10.3.

Athenagoras may have acquired the interpretive tradition of Proverbs 8:22 from Justin as he elsewhere demonstrates little influence from Second Temple exegetical traditions.

Theophilus also relates the idea that God uses a mediator in creating the world to scripture, namely Psalm 33/2:6 (“God made all things through his Logos and Wisdom, for by his Logos the heavens were made firm and by his Spirit all their Power”)²¹ and John 1:1–3 (“He had this Logos as a servant in the things created by him, and through him he has made all things”).²² Like Justin, Theophilus finds the agent of the Logos in the Genesis account of creation, with its emphasis on the speech of God as the locus of the creative act. Accordingly, Theophilus writes, “Therefore the Command of God, his Logos, shining like a lamp in a closed room, illuminated the region under the heaven, making light separately from the world.”²³ Theophilus in effect has personified the command of God, since this speech, the active Logos, literally brings about God’s creative intentions.

Like Justin, Theophilus also uses ἀρχή in reference to the Logos, more likely drawing on the Jewish Wisdom tradition of a personified agent present with God in creation. Although strictly referring to the Father, Theophilus first makes the connection between Ἀρχή and Λόγος in *Autol.* 1.3 where he writes, “If I call him Logos, I speak of him as Beginning [Ἀρχήν].” In *Autol.* 2.10, he returns to the association of Ἀρχή and Λόγος in relation to the Second Person. Here, he develops Justin’s account of the Logos as God’s personified speech in Genesis by connecting the personified Ἀρχή of Proverbs 8:22ff with the ἀρχή of Genesis 1:1 (“In the beginning [ἐν ἀρχῇ] God created . . .”). In the original context of Genesis, ἀρχή likely indicates an element of time (“in the beginning”),²⁴ but Theophilus employs the ontological connotation to indicate the Logos as the ‘principle’ of the universe. He writes, “[the Logos is] called Beginning [Ἀρχή] because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him . . . And Moses, who lived many years before Solomon—or rather, the Logos of God speaking through him as an instrument—says: ‘In the beginning God made heaven and earth.’ First he mentioned Beginning [Ἀρχήν] and creation, and

²¹ *Autol.* 1.7.

²² *Autol.* 2.10. See *Autol.* 2.22 for the direct quotation of John 1:1–3.

²³ *Autol.* 2.13, Grant, 49.

²⁴ Although ἀρχή can take a temporal connotation (‘beginning’), as opposed to an ontological connotation (‘cause’ or ‘principle’), Van Winden notes that “the Greek mind links the meaning of the two terms much more closely than the English words ‘beginning’ and ‘origin’, and, consequently, passes more easily from the temporal sense of ἀρχή to that of ‘cause.’” Van Winden, “In the Beginning,” in den Boeft and Runia, *Arche*, 61.

only then did he introduce God . . . to show that by his Logos God made heaven and earth and what is in them . . .”²⁵ The linking of Genesis 1:1 and Proverbs 8:22 through the ἀρχή common to both verses is representative of a Second Temple interpretive tradition, the impetus for which was reconciling the distinct accounts of creation represented in both.²⁶ Nevertheless, Theophilus’ motivation is not to reconcile Proverbs and Genesis, so much as it is to demonstrate the textual evidence of the presence of a personified Logos with God in the beginning (hence, his efforts in other places to equate Λόγος and Ἀρχή). For Theophilus, the Logos is present with God in creation not only through the metaphoric connection of God’s speech to the title ‘Logos’, but through his textual presence in Moses’ description of the account.²⁷

Despite their claims regarding the presence of the Logos’ mediatory work in scripture, the Apologists’ language and manner of argumentation suggests a Middle Platonic influence as the primary source of the idea. The Middle Platonists’ emphasis on the transcendence of the One led them to speak of an effectual or active power of God in the world through the use of ‘power’ (δύναμις) and ‘energy’ (ἐνέργεια) language.²⁸ Notably, Eusebius records a passage from Atticus that is demonstrative of this use, “Plato holds that the world is the fairest work, and has attributed to the creator of the universe a power [δύναμις] by means of which he created the world which did not exist before.”²⁹

25 *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 41.

26 Several examples of the tradition exist in the Targums, as well as in Philo who writes in one place, “By using different names for it, Moses indicates that the exalted, heavenly wisdom has many names: he calls it ‘beginning’ [ἀρχή], ‘image,’ and ‘appearance of God.’” Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 1:43 quoted in Kugel, *Traditions*, 46. Theophilus’ use of Prov. 8:22 to refer to the pre-existent Logos creates an inconsistency in his pneumatology, as I will show in chapter four. See below p. 163.

27 Theophilus includes an additional image, not present in Justin or Athenagoras, to express this mediating and creative function of the Logos. The Logos and the Sophia (most often identified as the Holy Spirit) are the “hands of God” by which he creates the world (*Autol.* 2.18). Although Theophilus employs this image to express the instrumentality of the Logos, it has more bearing for the present work in its implications for the inner relationships of God, Logos, and Sophia. As such, I will reserve comment on this passage until chapter five. Likewise, as I have said, I will reserve comment on the numerous ‘hands of God’ statements in Irenaeus’ work until chapter five.

28 Although δύναμις played a crucial role in Plato’s philosophy, it did not acquire the meaning of the effectual or active power of God until the writings of the Middle Platonists. See Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 54–93 and Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 347 (see pp. 346–54 in relation to the current discussion).

29 Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 15.6 as quoted in Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 347.

This active power was contrasted, and ontologically subordinated, to the static, transcendent nature of the One, which enabled the Middle Platonists to affirm a creative and providential function of God in the world while keeping the divine nature free of mixture and contact with material creation. As the *Didask.* notes, “[The First God] is Father through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect and the Soul of the World in accordance with himself and his own thoughts. By his own will he has filled all things with himself, rousing up the Soul of the World and turning it towards himself, as being the cause of its intellect. It is this latter that, set in order by the Father, itself imposes order on all of nature in this world.”³⁰

Of all the Apologists, Justin most clearly utilizes power language common to the Middle Platonists.³¹ First, Justin continually describes the Logos as the Power (Δύναμις) of God in the world.³² He writes, “Jesus Christ alone has truly been begotten as Son by God, being His Logos and First-Begotten

30 *Didask.* 10.3, Dillon, 18 with minor revisions, italics added. In an insightful piece of scholarship, Edwards traces the distinction of the transcendent, static god and active god in the thought of Numenius in comparison to Justin’s conception of the Logos. Edwards, “Platonic Schooling,” 22–29. Likewise, Barnes notes the witness of Numenius specifically to show that he raised an opposition between the divine essence, or divinity itself (οὐσία), and the divine activity (δύναμις or ἐνέργεια), as noted with different language in the *Didask.* Barnes writes, “The fact that in this passage Numenius groups δύναμις and ἐνέργεια together, such that δύναμις (like ἐνέργεια) stands over against οὐσία (not grouping power with essence) shows a distinctive understanding of the ontological status of δύναμις . . . This set of distinctions, with its implicit boundaries of unity, situates all divine activity on the side of what is not divinity itself, leaving the real divinity (οὐσία) unengaged. The divine οὐσία stands above and apart from matter, but its δύναμις or ἐνέργεια can join with matter.” Barnes, *Power of God*, 102–3.

31 Although the language is Middle Platonic, Alan F. Segal has shown how Jewish rabbis would have understood the sort of power arguments made by the Apologists. According to Segal, the rabbis saw this argumentation as heretical precisely because it emphasized a second divine figure in heaven alongside the Most High God. In regard to Justin, Segal shows how the texts upon which the Martyr relies to prove the divinity of Christ in *Dial.* (e.g., Gen. 1:27, 3:22, Ps. [LXX] 44:8–9, and Dan. 7:9) are the very texts that the rabbis put into the mouths of those espousing the two powers heresy. Segal, *Two Powers*, 221–25.

32 In general, Justin classifies the Logos with the powers (δυνάμεις), a category that also includes numerous intermediary beings, such as the angels and the demons. My interest in Justin’s power language is not in relation to this category, but in connection to its Middle Platonic indebtedness. On Justin’s category of δυνάμεις, see Goodenough, *Justin Martyr*, 155–59, 182, 185, Christian Oeyen, “Die Lehre der göttlichen Kräfte bei Justin,” *SP* 11.2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972), 215–21, and more recently Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Angelic Spirit in Early Christianity: Justin, the Martyr and Philosopher,” *JrnRel* 88, no. 2 (2008): 190–208, and Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 25–31.

and Power . . .”³³ Further, he writes, “The Spirit and the Power from God cannot therefore be understood as anything else than the Logos . . .”³⁴ Although Logos language is rare in the *Dial.*, the same equation between Logos and Power appears there when Justin writes, “My statements will now be confirmed by none other than the Word of Wisdom, who is this God begotten from the Father of all, and who is Word and Wisdom and Power and Glory of him who begot him.”³⁵ In another place, Justin connects the δύναμις specifically to the creative work of God when he claims, “God has begotten from himself a certain rational power as a beginning before all creatures.”³⁶ Elsewhere, Justin contrasts this use of δύναμις as the creative force in the world with the God who is above the workings of the world. He writes, “He is the Power of the ineffable Father.”³⁷ The descriptor ἄρρητος underscores the contrast between a transcendent, distant, and static God with a present and active Logos, which mirrors the contrast witnessed in the Middle Platonic use of δύναμις. The adjective ἄρρητος has a semantic connection to speech, as in ‘unutterable.’ In other words, the Father who does not speak has the Logos (Word) as his voice.³⁸

Justin uses δύναμις in other ways as well. For example, he states that the Second Person is not only the Power of God but is himself a power alongside God’s own power.³⁹ He simultaneously can claim that the Second Person was conceived by the power of God and that he was conceived by the power of the Logos.⁴⁰ He even says that the word (λόγος) coming from the mouth

33 1 *Apol.* 23.2.

34 1 *Apol.* 33.6, ACW 56:46 with minor revisions. The context of the latter statement is an exegesis of Luke 1:31–35, a section of the annunciation of the angel to Mary. Luke records the angel’s words as follows: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power [δύναμις] of the Most High will overshadow you . . .” Luke 1:35, NRSV translation.

35 *Dial.* 61.3, FC 3:94. Bobichon notes that ‘Power’ is the only non-scriptural title in this list. Bobichon, *Dialogue* 2:745. He fails to note here that Paul uses Δύναμις of Christ along with Σοφία in 1 Cor. 1:24 or that Justin reads the Δύναμις in Luke 1:35 as a title of the Logos. Arguably, Theophilus also is familiar with Paul’s statement (see *Autol.* 2.22 where he likewise equates δύναμις and σοφία). Nonetheless, Bobichon ultimately is correct to find the context of meaning for the title in Middle Platonism.

36 “[Α]ρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δυνάμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικὴν . . .” *Dial.* 61.1. I follow Falls in taking ἀρχὴν according to Justin’s use of ἀρχή as ‘principle.’ Thus, “as a beginning” instead of “in the beginning.” See Falls, FC 3: 94n40. See *Dial.* 62.4, quoted above p. 95.

37 “[Δ]ύναμις ἐστὶ τοῦ ἀρρήτου πατρὸς . . .” 2 *Apol.* 10.8 (see also 2 *Apol.* 13.4).

38 This sort of contrast is purely Middle Platonic, as the scripture writers do not shy from saying that God speaks in and to the material world.

39 1 *Apol.* 32, 40, 60

40 1 *Apol.* 32–33, 46.

of the Christ who walked on earth is the power of God.⁴¹ These varied uses of power language within the same argument demonstrate the degree to which the meaning of δύναμις in reference to the Second Person had yet to be determined.⁴²

Athenagoras invokes Middle Platonic meaning not through δύναμις language so much as through his use of the words ἰδέα and ἐνέργεια. He states, “the Son of God is the Logos of the Father in Ideal Form [ἰδέα] and Energizing Power [ἐνέργεια] . . .”⁴³ Although he prefers these terms to δύναμις when describing the active work of the Logos, elsewhere Athenagoras states that the Son and the Spirit are themselves Powers in the same way as the Father is a Power⁴⁴ and that the Son and the Father share the same power.⁴⁵ Theophilus speaks

41 1 *Apol.* 14. See also *Dial.* 49.8 where Justin claims that the power of God is hidden in Christ on earth.

42 These uses of δύναμις coalesced to one generally accepted use in the pro-Nicenes of the later fourth century. Barnes is to be credited with refocusing attention on δύναμις as a Trinitarian title as well as identifying the debt to philosophy regarding the meaning for this term in Christian Trinitarian discourse in general and Gregory of Nyssa in particular. Barnes, *Power of God*, esp. 125–72. His overview of the use of δύναμις in the early common era (pp. 94–124) does not address its use in the apologists, as he is interested only in showing that the precedence for the use of power language is available prior to the fourth century. Still, his work is crucial for a general understanding of the philosophical background of δύναμις.

43 *Leg.* 10.2. I follow Schoedel, both here and in *Leg.* 10.3, in translating ἰδέα and ἐνέργεια as “Ideal Form” and “Energizing Power,” respectively, both to bring out the Middle Platonic influence of these terms and to note the connection that exists between ἐνέργεια and δύναμις. Joseph Hugh Crehan’s rendering of “thought and power” is technically correct, but it misses the Middle Platonic import of meaning. Crehan, trans., *Athenagoras: Embassy for the Christians and The Resurrection of the Dead*, ACW 23 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1956), 40. In Athenagoras’ formula, the Logos appears to take the place of the Platonic ideas as the ideal likeness in which God creates the visible world. Something similar is operative in places of Philo’s corpus where the Logos is *synonymous* with all of the ideas. For example, Philo writes, “[W]hen the substance of the universe was without shape and figure God gave it these; when it had no definite character God moulded it into definiteness, and, when He had perfected it, stamped the entire universe with His image and an ideal form [εἰκόνη καὶ ἰδέα], even His own Word [τὸ ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ].” *Dreams* 2.46 in *Philo* 5, trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, LCL 275 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 463. Accordingly, as with Philo, Athenagoras’ Logos is both the form and the power that actuates that form.

44 *Leg.* 12.3.

45 *Leg.* 10.2, 5, 24.2, 30.6. Athenagoras, more than either Justin or Theophilus, uses the notion of power as an argument for the unity of the three, a discussion to which I will turn in detail in chapter five. See below pp. 197–99.

simply of the Logos (and Spirit) as the Power of God,⁴⁶ which he explicitly equates to ἐνέργεια.⁴⁷

The Middle Platonic influence upon the Apologists' conception of the Logos as the active Power of God in the world results in a similar contrast between the transcendent, static God and the present, active Logos in their thought. Theophilus writes, "[T]he God and Father of the universe is unconfined and is not present in a place, for there is no place of his rest. But his Logos, through whom he made all things, who is his Power and Wisdom, assuming the role of the Father and Lord of the universe, was present in paradise in the role of God and conversed with Adam."⁴⁸ For an entity to be at work *in* the world implies that the entity is located in the world, which is impossible to affirm of the Most High God who, due to his transcendence, cannot be in this material world. Accordingly, the Logos works on behalf of God in the world. Theophilus continues, "[W]henever the Father of the universe wills to do so he sends [the Logos] into some place where he is present and is seen and is heard. He is sent by God and is present in a place."⁴⁹ The result of this conception for the Apologists is a Logos who functions primarily as an intermediary between God and material creation and whose ability to work in the world is predicated upon his diminished divinity.⁵⁰ In other words, the Logos can work in the world because he is not transcendent and invisible to the same degree as the Father. Unlike the Father, he can be located in a place.

This contrast between God and the Logos is displayed most clearly in Justin's interpretation of the Septuagint theophanies to which he refers in 1 *Apol.* 63 and develops in detail in *Dial.* 48–62. Justin's description of the work of the Logos in the theophanies comes in the context not of the Logos' work as agent of creation, but in the Logos' work as revealer of the purposes and identity of God the Father to the material world, a crucial aspect of his Logos theology.⁵¹ Justin believes the subject of the theophanies is the Logos rather than the Father.⁵² He introduces the theophanies to answer the

46 *Autol.* 2.10, 22.

47 *Autol.* 1.3, Grant, 5.

48 *Autol.* 2.22, Grant, 63.

49 *Autol.* 2.22, Grant, 65.

50 On this point, see P. Gervais Aeby, *Les missions divines: De saint Justin à Origène*, Paradosis 12 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1958), 10–15.

51 Conversely, neither Athenagoras nor Theophilus give much attention to the revelatory function of the Logos.

52 Philo also understands the subject of the theophanies to be the Logos and the motive driving his interpretation is similar, although not identical, to Justin's, namely that the anthropomorphisms attributed to God in the theophany stories are blasphemous to his

critique made by Trypho at the beginning of *Dial.* 48, namely, that the belief in a divine Christ who becomes flesh is illogical. Trypho's question is occasioned by the various Messianic proofs given in the preceding chapters where Justin claims, without argumentation, that the Messiah is divine (*Dial.* 36.2ff). Trypho thinks this belief is illogical and states the common Jewish understanding that the Messiah will be a human (*Dial.* 49.1).⁵³ Thus, to argue that a divine Christ could become flesh, Justin must first prove the existence of another God testified in scripture.⁵⁴ For Justin, the theophanies show another God in addition to the God in heaven because scripture refers to the figure that appeared on earth as 'God' and 'Lord.' Ostensibly, Justin uses scripture to prove this point by showing from the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Psalms 45/4 and 110/109 that scripture speaks of two different Gods and Lords. Nevertheless, the logic and force of the argument depends upon Justin's philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of God as transcendent and unable to appear in and work in material creation. This logic is displayed in his interpretation of the theophany of Exodus 3, where he writes, "[N]o one with even the slightest intelligence would dare assert that the Creator of all things left his super-celestial realms to make himself visible in a little spot on earth."⁵⁵ Likewise, in a summary statement toward the end of the work, Justin writes, "And I presume that I have shown sufficiently that when God says, 'God went up from Abraham'. . .you should not imagine that the Unbegotten God himself went down or went up from any place. For, the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor arises, but always remains in his place . . ."⁵⁶ This characteristic of the Most High God requires

divine nature. See, for example, Philo's interpretation in *Dreams* 1.231–36. The question of whether Philo is a source of Justin's interpretation of the theophanies has been the subject of ongoing debate that does not affect the present work. For a comprehensive treatment of the question, see Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile*, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 409–24.

53 Falls' translation divides this section into two parts at chapters 54 and 55. While the interpretation of the theophanies proper is not addressed until *Dial.* 55, the theophanies are introduced as part of a larger argument answering the original question that opens *Dial.* 48. Thus, the entire passage should be seen as a unity and the theophanies as proof of the divinity of the Son.

54 Indeed, Trypho demands such a proof with his interjection in *Dial.* 50.1. He says, "Tell me, then, first of all, how you can prove that there is another God besides the Creator of the world . . ." FC 3:76.

55 *Dial.* 60.2.

56 *Dial.* 127.1–2, FC 3:191.

that the one who literally appears on earth in the theophany accounts must be a different being, even though scripture calls this being ‘God.’

This different being, Justin continues, is the δύναμις λογική of God, indicated by different titles, “sometimes the Glory of the Lord, other times Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word [Λόγος].”⁵⁷ This language reveals an amalgam of scriptural and philosophical imagery to describe the Second Person. As with the creative function of the Logos, then, Justin attributes the contrast between God and the Logos in his revelatory work in the theophanies to scripture, but what drives his interpretation are the philosophical assumptions of Middle Platonism.

Included in Justin’s description of the Logos’ revelatory function is his famed doctrine of the ‘Spermatikos Logos,’ which, to a lesser extent, reveals the same contrast insofar as it necessitates the Logos’ location *in* creation. The doctrine holds that the Logos reveals the truth about God, not just to Jews, but to all human beings by virtue, it would seem, of their humanity. For example, although the Greek philosophers did not know Christ, their humanity allowed them awareness of partial truths that align in certain ways to the revealed truth of the scriptures. Justin writes, “For each person spoke rightly having understood that which was related to him, according to the part present in him of the divine Logos . . . For all the writers were able to see realities darkly, through the presence in them of an implanted seed of the Logos.”⁵⁸ Elsewhere, he writes, “And those of the Stoic school, since they were honorable at least in their ethical teaching, as were also the poets in some particulars, on account of a seed of the Logos implanted in every race of men and women . . .”⁵⁹ These passages imply the Logos reveals some part of the truth to all humans—the Logos is literally implanted into every human being. Still, the implanted Logos exists only partially in humanity as ‘seeds.’ These seeds are, as Richard Norris explains, “those rudimentary moral and religious conceptions which are the common stock of human piety.”⁶⁰ While the implanted seeds of the Logos give philosophers access to truth, Justin believes the incomplete nature of the Logos within humanity leads to the errors, disagreements and contradictions that exist among the various philosophical schools. By contrast, Christians have received the whole Logos in the person of Jesus Christ. He writes, “What we have, then, appears to be greater than all human teaching, because the whole rational principle became Christ, who appeared for our

57 *Dial.* 61.1, FC 3:94.

58 2 *Apol.* 13.3, 6, ACW 56:83–84 with minor revisions.

59 2 *Apol.* 8.1, ACW 56:79 with minor revisions. See also 1 *Apol.* 5, 44, 46.

60 Norris, *God and World*, 44.

sake, body, and reason, and soul.”⁶¹ Therefore, the Christians do not err in the same way as the philosophers because they have met and known the Logos in his whole and complete person.⁶²

The use of Logos theology in the Apologists’ writings, indicated by both the philosophical precedents identified here as well as the manner in which the Apologists argue for the presence of the Logos in scripture, raises two observations critical to the nature of the Second Person. First, the Apologists believe the Logos is divine. This truth is discerned from the Apologists’ insistence that he is called such in scripture, but is argued for with the appropriation of Middle Platonic logic that posits the Logos as the active power of God in the world. This is demonstrated by the Logos’ role as creative agent⁶³ and, in Justin’s thought, as revelatory agent both in the theophanic appearances and his implanted, though partial, presence in all humans. Nevertheless, the divine nature of the Logos is not equal to the divine nature of God. Rather, the nature

61 2 *Apol.* 10.1, ACW 56:80.

62 The question of the ‘Spermatikos Logos’ is a long debated facet of Justin’s thought. I have offered the traditional understanding that seeds of the Logos are literally implanted in humanity. Other scholars, for example Edwards, claim that even the revelation to the Greeks in Justin’s understanding is tied to the scriptural revelation, explained by Justin’s insistence that Plato read and copied Moses. Edwards, “Justin’s Logos,” 261–80. Edwards’ interpretation fails to do justice to the pertinent texts of the *Apologies* by reading them through a prior understanding of Logos in the *Dial.* In the *Apologies*, Justin never suggests that the Logos is implanted in the scriptures, but he says quite clearly that the Logos is implanted in the race of humans (2 *Apol.* 8) and each individual human (2 *Apol.* 13). Edwards’ interpretation is driven by a need to unify the respective theologies of the *Dial.* and the *Apologies*, which he believes have been interpreted according to an inaccurate dualism that sees Justin as a Jew when speaking to Trypho and a Greek when writing the *Apologies*. While I agree with his efforts in principle, Edwards does not give adequate consideration to Justin’s purpose and audience in the *Apologies*. As I argued in the first chapter, Justin attempts to reach the Greeks according to their categories and their language. Therefore, it makes more sense (especially given the truth of Justin’s Hellenistic—as opposed to Jewish—background) to search for the primary meaning of Logos within the Greek and not the Jewish idiom. In this interpretation, I am not committing the mistake Edwards calls the “fallacious modern axiom that an author must address himself entirely to the comprehension of his present audience,” for even with his adoption of the ‘Spermatikos Logos,’ Justin challenges aspects of the Greek conception. Edwards, “Justin’s Logos,” 279. Nevertheless, he accomplishes this task not by rejecting the Greek conception altogether but by maintaining that it is inadequate and incomplete.

63 In the previous chapter, I showed that the Apologists understood the work of creation as the power proper to divinity. If only God can create, then the Logos’ ability to create on behalf of God implies his divine nature. See above, pp. 55–57 and 64–67.

of the Logos is a diminished or lesser divinity confirmed by the Middle Platonic precedence of the diminished divinity of the World Soul, as compared to the Primary God, and the ability of the Logos to work in the world in creation and to be seen in the world in the scriptural theophany accounts.

Second, the Logos is not a mere extension of the Most High God or a mode of his working, but he is a distinct entity separate from the Father. The revelatory function of the Logos in the works of Justin is particularly illuminating for the second point. The theophanies, and to a lesser extent the ‘Spermatikos Logos,’ reveal that the entity of the Logos in the world is not an impersonal, spiritual power; instead, the Logos is a real, concrete entity who can be seen and who can interact with, or in the case of the ‘Spermatikos Logos,’ influence humanity. Justin specifically raises the potential misunderstanding that the Logos is not a real entity distinct from the Father in his summary of his interpretation of the theophanies near the conclusion of *Dial.* He writes, “But some teach that this power is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun . . . It has also been shown at length that this power . . . not only is numbered as different by its name (as is the light of the sun), but is something distinct in real number.”⁶⁴ In other words, the Logos as witnessed by those individuals was real, and if it was real, it could not have been God/Father, because he “neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor arises, but always remains in his place . . .”⁶⁵ The logic establishing this argument again implies that while the Logos has a divine status, it is necessarily a diminished divinity since the Logos is able to appear physically and to be present in a place, a quality denied of the transcendent, invisible Father.⁶⁶ The divine and distinct nature of the Logos is confirmed and developed in the Apologists’ understanding of the generation of the Logos from God, to which I now turn.

64 *Dial.* 128.3–4, FC 3:193–94.

65 *Dial.* 127.2, FC 3:191.

66 Munier vindicates Justin of the accusation of subordination based on passages that are routinely raised in support of this interpretation, namely those passages that place the Logos in second place after the Father (e.g., 1 *Apol.* 13.3) because he understands them to be inspired by the incarnate Son’s place in the liturgical statements as after the Father. Munier, *Apologie*, 103–4. According to my interpretation which has accounted more thoroughly for the influence of Middle Platonism, passages such as 1 *Apol.* 13.3 reflect not only the liturgy, but also the subordinated divinity of the Son—he has second place precisely because of his lesser quality divinity. I will offer this interpretation of passages like 1 *Apol.* 13.3 in chapter five. See below pp. 192–97.

The Generation of the Logos

The Apologists do not address the generation of the Logos for its own sake; rather, they address the generation as part of a larger discussion on the question of the nature of the Logos.⁶⁷ In fact, the number of pertinent texts regarding the generation in the Apologists' writings is relatively small.⁶⁸ They address the generation in order to explain how the agent of God's action in the world relates to God—a proper explanation of this relationship needed to account both for God's oneness and the existence of a separate, divine agent alongside God. The explanation the Apologists offer identifies the Logos as God's own rationality existing internally or as a part of God from eternity that is generated into a separate entity at some point before the creation of the world in order to serve as God's active Power. The generation is important for the Apologists because it marks the distinguishing of God and the Logos and accounts for both the oneness of God (from eternity, prior to the generation), and the distinctness of the divine agent (following the generation).

Logos language proved particularly useful in this explanation of the relationship between the two Gods because the Apologists' intended audience would agree with the supposition that the divine being was eternally reasonable. As a result, Logos language offered the Apologists a means to speak of the generation apart from the implication of a beginning, which likely explains their preference for Logos imagery as opposed to the more traditional filial imagery.⁶⁹

67 The Logos' generation as a topic of theological interest for its own sake becomes standard practice a century later with Origen, and in the fourth century, the generation of the Logos becomes one of the primary battlegrounds of the protracted Nicene controversy.

68 Justin touches the subject in several places, the most in depth and important of which are *2 Apol.* 6 and *Dial.* 61–64. Athenagoras only addresses the generation once, in the course of his description of Christian belief in *Leg.* 10. Theophilus speaks of the generation in two places, *Autol.* 2.10 and 22.

69 This is not to suggest that the Apologists never employ filial language in reference to the Second Person. Indeed, although each Apologist uses Logos imagery in passages on the generation, at times they employ the verb *γεννάω* to explain the process. In all but two of his descriptions of the generation, Justin uses *γεννάω* (*2 Apol.* 6.3, *Dial.* 61.1, 62.4, 76.1, 105.1, 128.4). In *Dial.* 62.4, he uses the verb *προβάλλω*, which connotes “uttering a word” as he indicates in *Dial.* 61.2, a passage I will discuss in detail below. In *Dial.* 100.4, Justin uses *προέρχουμαι* (‘to go out from’), which again has less of a human begetting connotation as it does one of human speech. Theophilus uses the passive form of *γεννάω* in both *Autol.* 2.10 and 2.22. Only Athenagoras avoids the word for its human connotations and opts instead for a word more consistent with the *Λόγος* image, namely, *προέρχουμαι*. (Incidentally, Justin's use of the same word may reflect a similar tradition to that which influenced Athenagoras' use.) Of course, the Apologists' mixing of Logos theology and generation language is not without precedent. The Gospel of John used both images in its

Nevertheless, this explanation implies that the Logos has two distinct stages of existence, the first from eternity as a power internal to God, and the second, following its generation, as a separate divine entity free to work on behalf of God both in creating and working in the world. The generation of the Logos, then, marks a qualitative difference in the mode or manner of the existence of the Logos. Only in the second stage is the Logos able to move about in the world (no action is attributed to the Logos in its first stage) and, therefore, only in the second stage is the Logos properly distinguished from the Father as a separate entity. As K.G. Semisch long ago observed, “As long as the Logos rested in God, it was essentially identical with his substance . . . by coming forth from the divine essence, it first attained a personal self-subsistence.”⁷⁰ Scholars have identified this manner of speaking of the Logos as ‘two-stage Logos theology’ to note the difference in the Logos’ stages of existence before and after his generation. Two-stage Logos theology pervades nearly all the writers of the second century and even into the early third century.⁷¹

The Apologists demonstrate this understanding of the two-stage existence of the Logos with an increasing degree of clarity.⁷² Justin is not explicit, but implies a two-stage existence of the Logos through the causal connection he

Prologue within the space of a few verses. Likely, the filial language of the Apologists is traditional, whereas the Logos theology carries the weight of the argument.

70 Semisch, *Justin Martyr: His Life, Writings, and Opinions*, vol. 2, trans. J.E. Ryland, Biblical Cabinet Series 42 (Edinburgh: T. Clark, 1843), 181.

71 The recognition of two-stage Logos theology in the apologists goes back at least as far as Semisch’s 1840s work on Justin. (Orbe mistakenly identifies Otto as the originator of the idea. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 570. Semisch predates Otto by nearly 40 years.) Harnack, who believed that the Logos theology of the apologists was essentially unanimous, widened the perspective to include the apologists as a whole. Harnack, *History of Dogma* 2:243ff. Following Harnack, this two-stage understanding has been adopted by a majority of scholars, including Aeby, Barnard, Daniélou, Grant, Grillmeier, Kelly, Lebreton, Loofs, McVey, Orbe, Osborn, Otto, Pfäffisch, Prestige, Quasten, Spanneut, Tixeront, and Zahn. Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of two-stage Logos theology in relation to the apologists comes from H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1: *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 192–96. Wolfson also traces two-stage Logos theology into later centuries through Tertullian, Novatian, and Lactantius.

72 This statement is in contrast to Kelly’s argument that Justin is the clearest of the two-stage Logos theologians. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 96ff. His statement is the result of confounding the Stoic distinction between a λόγος ἐνδιθέτος and a λόγος προφορικός with the Stoic notion of the λόγος σπερματικός. In point of fact, the two have little relation in connection to the generation of the Logos and the resulting two stages of its existence; only the former bears on the question of the generation. While Justin is clearest on

draws between the generation of the Logos and his mediating role in creation. In other words, for Justin, the Logos came forth in order to serve the Father in this manner. The unavoidable result, as most commentators note, is the location of the generation at a specific point in time, which, given the Logos' eternal nature, suggests an eternal interior stage of existence prior to the generation. The key text here is 2 *Apol.* 6, which states, "But his [God's] Son, who alone is called Son in the proper sense, the Logos who, before all the things which were made, was both with him and was begotten when at the beginning he made and ordered all things through him . . ." ⁷³ The ὅτε clause indicates the timing of the generation and its connection to the creation. He was begotten *when* God made all things through him; in other words, he came forth for the purpose of being God's agent in creation.

In the *Dial.*, this two-stage understanding is present despite a significant downplaying of Logos theology. Justin writes, "But this Offspring, who was truly brought forth from the Father before all the things which were made, was with the Father and with this one the Father communed . . ." ⁷⁴ Here, the communing that occurs between the Father and his Offspring only occurs after the generation, once the second stage has been inaugurated. ⁷⁵ Likewise, Justin writes, "God has generated from himself a certain rational power as a beginning before all creatures . . ." ⁷⁶ The phrase ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, which will reappear in the more developed statements of the other Apologists, indicates a prior, internal stage from which the Logos emerges—one where, as Barnard notes, the Logos is essentially indistinguishable from the Father. ⁷⁷ Moreover, Justin here stresses the reason for the generation as the work of the Logos in creation. These statements agree with others in the *Dial.* where Justin asserts that an act of the will of God brings forth the Son. This understanding seems to indicate that the generation (and thus separate existence) of the Logos was not

the notion of a λόγος σπερματικός, he is not as clear as later writers of the ἐνδιάθετος / προφορικός distinction, as we shall see.

73 "Ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ἐκείνου, ὁ μόνος λεγόμενος κυρίως υἱός, ὁ Λόγος πρὸ τῶν ποιημάτων [καί] συνὼν καὶ γεννώμενος, ὅτε τὴν ἀρχὴν δι' αὐτοῦ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε . . ." 2 *Apol.* 6.3.

74 "Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο τὸ τῷ ὄντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθέν γέννημα πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνῆν τῷ πατρί, καὶ τούτῳ ὁ πατὴρ προσομιλεῖ . . ." *Dial.* 62.4.

75 See Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 571. For Orbe, this is the key passage that shows two-stage Logos theology in Justin.

76 "[Α]ρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δυνάμιν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικὴν . . ." *Dial.* 61.1.

77 Barnard, ACW 56: 190–91.

necessary and that the Logos' existence as a divine entity distinguishable from the Father is not eternal.⁷⁸

In the same context, Justin also offers two human analogies to describe the generation. He writes, "But, does not something similar happen also with us humans? When we utter [προβάλλοντες] a word, it can be said that we beget [γεννώμεν] the word, but not by cutting it off, in the sense that our power of uttering words would thereby be diminished. We can observe a similar nature when one fire kindles another without losing anything, but remaining the same; yet the enkindled fire seems to exist of itself and to shine without lessening the brilliancy of the first fire."⁷⁹ Here Justin claims that God does not cease to have Logos after the generation in the same way that humans who utter words do not cease then to have the capacity to speak and fire, once it begins to burn, does not cease then to be fire. The force of the analogies turns on the interior/exterior distinction of the stages of existence—Justin is compelled to clarify his description of generation that the 'going out' of the Logos from God does not result in an irrational God. Only if he truly believed that the interior Logos separated from God at his generation and became exterior would he need to offer such a clarification. Whether this means God has his own separate Logos or he remains in contact with the separated Logos is unclear.

In the summation of his argument in the *Dial.*, Justin returns to these analogies and acknowledges their intrinsic problems; namely, they blur the real distinction between God and the Logos.⁸⁰ Because of his interest in locating the Logos in creation and identifying the Logos with Jesus of Nazareth who walked the earth, Justin denies this implication of the analogies, as noted above. Nonetheless, he ultimately does not reject them as helpful analogies as

78 Regarding the generation of the Logos from the will of God, see *Dial.* 61.1, 76.1, 100.4, 127.4, 128.4. Bobichon rightly notes that Justin frequently parallels the two generations of the Son, the first before the creation of the world and the second as a man in Mary's womb. Both generations are according to God's will. Bobichon, *Dialogue* 2:746nn1. It should be noted that Origen affirmed the existence of an eternal generation of the Logos and that the generation was an act of the Father's will. This combination was not deemed incompatible until the fourth century. In the early Trinitarian debates, Alexander and Athanasius claimed that the Son's generation was eternal and therefore necessary and of the substance, not the will, of God. Their opponents claimed that the Son's generation was not eternal and therefore was not necessary but an act of the Father's will. Justin's lack of explicit references to an eternal generation makes it likely he belongs in the latter trajectory.

79 *Dial.* 61.2, FC 3:94. The key verbs of the noted forms are προβάλλω and γεννάω, which Justin equates by analogy.

80 *Dial.* 128.2–4.

long as they remain consistent with a true distinction of entities. Thus, even in the face of difficulties, Justin does not deny the interior/exterior two-stage model. While I acknowledge, as some scholars do, that Justin generally remains silent about the stage of existence prior to the Logos' generation, even having to account for an earlier stage provides evidence that Justin belongs in this 'two-stage' school of thought.⁸¹

For Athenagoras, the difference in the two stages is more pronounced. Athenagoras writes, "He is the first begotten of the Father, not as one who came into being, for from the beginning God, being eternal mind, had in himself his logos [λόγον] since he is eternally rational [λογικός], but as one who came forth to be the Ideal Form and the Energizing Power of everything material..."⁸² This statement contains all the characteristics of two-stage Logos theology. The Logos exists from eternity inside God as his rationality (λογικός). The word play of λόγος and λογικός suggests that the Second Person is not yet separate from God or distinguishable as a rational entity in the first stage. Rather, in this stage, the Second Person is merely the λογικός of the Father. Only after he comes forth can he be called Λόγος properly in his own right.⁸³ Significantly, the logos does nothing in this first stage that would necessitate a distinct existence. His generation was not necessary; rather, he came out in order to serve

81 Scholars are divided regarding the presence of two-stage Logos theology in Justin more than in other apologists. For example, although Lebreton accuses Tatian and Theophilus of this formula, he does not include Justin in his critique. *Histoire* 2:422ff. While Orbe identifies the distinction of the stages in Justin's thought, he downplays its importance in Justin's work and does not see any similarity, as he does with Theophilus, to the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος / λόγος προφορικός distinction. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 574. Similarly, Osborn is insistent of two-stage Logos theology's presence in Theophilus but is vague regarding its presence in Justin. Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 30–31. Goodenough made the most sustained argument against the presence of two-stage Logos theology in Justin. Goodenough, *Justin Martyr*, esp. 154, 181ff.

82 "...πρῶτον γέννημα εἶναι τῷ πατρὶ, οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον (ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ θεός, νοῦς αἰδίου ὦν, εἶχεν αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, αἰδιῶς λογικὸς ὦν), ἀλλ' ὡς τῶν ὕλικῶν ξυμπάντων... ἰδέα καὶ ἐνέργεια εἶναι, προελθόν." *Leg.* 10.3.

83 Crehan's translation avoids this implication by rendering λογικός as 'Word' when he writes, "[F]or God was from the beginning being eternal mind, and had His Word [λόγος] within Himself, being from eternity possessed of a Word [λογικός]." ACW 23:40. He offers no reason for translating two different Greek descriptions with the same English word or for rendering an adjective with a noun. The plain translation indicates that λογικός refers to something other than the Second Person proper; Crehan's lack of justification here suggests there is none available. Pouderon's French translation is closer to the meaning of the passage: "*car dès l'origine Dieu, qui est intelligence éternelle, portrait en lui son Verbe [Λόγος], puisqu'il est éternellement raisonnable [λογικός]...*" Pouderon, trans., SC 379:103.

as the mediating agent in creation (“who came forth *to be* the Ideal Form and Energizing Power . . .”). Henceforth, the Logos is separate from God/Father. Athenagoras expresses what Justin merely implies, particularly regarding the quality of existence of the logos as indistinguishable from the Father in the first stage.

Moreover, Athenagoras is also clearer than Justin on the spatial connotations of the generation. Athenagoras uses the word *προέρχομαι*, ‘to go out,’ to indicate the generation of the Logos, as opposed to the more traditional *γεννάω* that Justin more often employed. In fact, Athenagoras’ use of *προέρχομαι* here stands in specific contrast to *γίνομαι* (‘to be born, created’) in order to avoid the connotation of procreation, and hence a beginning, implied with the former word.⁸⁴ This manner of conceiving the generation underscores the spatial separation—from eternity the Logos exists *within* God and at the generation separates or *goes out* from him to work in creation. This spatial conception is facilitated, and perhaps occasioned, by the spatial language to which the Apologists revert in maintaining the divine transcendence, as noted in the previous chapter.

Two-stage Logos theology reaches its zenith with Theophilus, who wrote, “Therefore God, having his own logos innate [*ἐνδιάθετον*], that is in his own bowels, generated him, along with his own sophia, vomiting him out before everything else. He used this Logos as a servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things.”⁸⁵ In this statement, the spatial implications of two-stage Logos thinking come to the forefront. The use of two phrases, *ἐνδιάθετος* and *ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις σπλάγχνοις*, emphasizes the interior nature of the Logos prior to its generation. *Ἐνδιάθετος* is a linguistics term, likely Stoic in origin, indicating ‘interior’ in the manner of a thought (as opposed to an externally uttered word, a contrast Theophilus will explicitly make in a later text). The phrase *ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις σπλάγχνοις* is added for emphasis and, for the first time, to assign a specific place of dwelling for this interior Logos. The word *σπλάγχνον* indicates the deepest part of a person, (e.g., ‘the bowels’) but the term also can connote love or affections. These details indicate that at this stage, the logos is not separate from the Father but instead is an intricate part of him. Nevertheless, at its generation this interior logos is made exterior.

84 Nevertheless, he still uses, without apparent difficulty, the title *πρώτον γέννημα* in the same passage.

85 “Ἐχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις σπλάγχνοις, ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας, ἐξερευξάμενος πρὸ τῶν ὄλων. Τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἔσχεν ὑπουργὸν τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν.” *Autol.* 2.10. Here, as elsewhere, I have adjusted Marcovich’s text that accords *λόγος* and *σοφία* with capital letters.

Although Theophilus uses the more common term for begetting (γεννάω), the participle ἐξερευξάμενος interprets the process of generation with a rather graphic, *spatial* connotation (“he vomited out”). What was interior to God has been separated from him in a forceful way and is now exterior, enabled to act as the agent of and in creation. All of these qualifiers have the same effect that Athenagoras accomplishes with his use of προέρχομαι (‘going out of’) to describe the logos’ generation. Theophilus’ failure to use the verb while possessing the same spatial meaning suggests he is following traditional language with his use of γεννάω.⁸⁶

Theophilus offers even more detail in a second passage where he explains whose voice spoke to Adam in the garden. He writes, “[It is] the Logos who is always innate [ἐνδιάθετον] in the heart of God. For before anything was created he was having this [logos] as his counselor, *since he was his own mind and thought*. But when God wished to make what he willed, he generated this logos as external [προφορικόν], as the firstborn of all creation . . .”⁸⁷ Here, Theophilus offers the strongest contrast yet between the two stages. Prior to the generation, the logos exists from eternity (διὰ παντός) interiorly or innate in God. Theophilus again uses ἐνδιάθετος with a specific interior location, this time the heart of God, for emphasis. The change from ‘bowels’ to ‘heart’ as the description of the interior stage in this passage indicates that Theophilus is searching for a term that implies the closest possible connection between God and his logos in the first stage, likely to indicate that the logos is not yet distinguishable from God.⁸⁸ This is confirmed by Theophilus’ interpretive gloss of John 1:1

86 Curry claims the use of the imagery of vomiting out “is an added and unnecessary detail which seems to be forced into service.” Curry, “Theogony of Theophilus,” 321. In fact, the image works quite well for emphasizing the distinction of the Logos from God, Theophilus’ primary point, and both the internal and external nature of the matter being vomited up. (The vomited matter exists internally in the body prior to its externalization as vomit.)

87 “...τὸν λόγον τὸν ὄντα διὰ παντός ἐνδιάθετον ἐν καρδίᾳ θεοῦ. Πρὸ γὰρ τι γίνεσθαι τοῦτον εἶχεν σύμβουλον, ἑαυτοῦ νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν ὄντα. Ὅποτε δὲ ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἐβουλεύσατο, τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐγέννησεν προφορικόν, πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως...” *Autol.* 2.22, italics added.

88 Something similar occurs in the prologue of John, where the Logos is described as existing in the bosom of the Father (although this existence is not relegated explicitly to the time prior to the generation by the writer of the fourth Gospel). The word used in the fourth Gospel is κόλπος, and it also can indicate the closest of associations (John 1:18). Given Theophilus’ familiarity with the Johannine Prologue, it is strange that he does not employ κόλπος to describe the interior dwelling place of the logos. Curry makes the same observation and suggests that Theophilus is here influenced by the Stoic-Hesiodic

where he writes, “[John] shows that originally God was alone and the logos was in him.”⁸⁹ The prepositional phrase ἐν πρώτοις confirms that the logos is in God, and indistinguishable from God, only in the first stage (“originally”).⁹⁰ Theophilus never refers to God as ‘alone’ after the generation of the Logos.

In this passage, unlike what was witnessed with Athenagoras, God’s logos appears to do something in the first stage which would necessitate its being distinguished from the Father, namely, it acts God’s counselor. The implication is that, even prior to the generation, the Logos is distinguishable from God and guides him. However, Theophilus immediately clarifies his meaning of σύμβουλον by stating that the logos prior to its generation is God’s *own* mind and thought, a repeated, and therefore emphasized, phrase from *Autol.* 2.10 (ἑαυτοῦ). While Theophilus also calls the separated Logos, that is the Logos of the second stage, God’s *own* Logos,⁹¹ what is different in this case is his identification of God’s logos prior to the generation with two other divine qualities, namely, νοῦς (mind) and φρόνησις (intelligence). God’s own mind and intelligence, in other words, guides his actions prior to creation. Therefore, this qualification of σύμβουλον appears to approximate Athenagoras’ statement that the logos in the first stage is God’s rationality (λογικός). Theophilus never so closely identifies the separated Logos with God’s attributes. Nor does he use σύμβουλον to describe the work of the separated Logos in the second stage but instead changes the descriptor from ‘counselor’ to ‘servant’ (ὑπουργός), as witnessed in *Autol.* 2.10. ‘Servant’ reflects, more clearly than ‘counselor,’ the hierarchical relationship Theophilus envisions between God and the separated Logos.⁹²

The generation, then, marks the end of this first stage and the beginning of another stage in which the Logos becomes distinguishable from the Father. Theophilus says that at the generation the Logos comes forth or out of God and is external (προφορικός), a word that stands in direct opposition to ἐνδιάθετος. As is often noted, these two terms originally appear in Stoic discussions of language where they mark the distinction between an interior thought existing within the mind (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) and that same thought existing as an

fragment 343. Curry, “Theogony of Theophilus,” 322. If Curry is right, it is further evidence of the presence of Stoic imagery and terminology throughout Theophilus’ discussion of the relationship between God and the Logos.

89 “... δεικνύς ὅτι ἐν πρώτοις μόνος ἦν ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ λόγος.” *Autol.* 2.22.

90 This is a qualification that the writer of the fourth Gospel never makes.

91 See *Autol.* 2.18, quoted below p. 115n95.

92 I will explore this hierarchy in chapter five below. See pp. 200–204.

exterior, spoken word (λόγος προφορικός).⁹³ The Apologists are the first figures to give the distinction cosmic, ontological significance, thereby emphasizing a spatial conception of the existence of the Logos—the logos was interior to God from eternity and in its generation comes out of God; after its generation, the Logos is henceforth external, free to move and act in creation, in this case as the being who speaks with Adam in the garden.

Finally, Theophilus clarifies another point that Justin implied but Athenagoras did not address, namely, the generation of the Logos does not render God without his Logos or irrational. Theophilus writes, “He did not deprive himself of the Logos, but generated the Logos and constantly converses with his Logos.”⁹⁴ This statement offers a poignant contrast to Theophilus’ statement that in the first stage, God is alone. Instead, God and the separated Logos are in communion through their conversation, a truth that is shown in Genesis 1:26, which Theophilus interprets as God speaking to his Logos and Sophia.⁹⁵ Their separation at the generation allows them to be in conversation as pictured in the account of the creation of humans.

Before assessing the Apologists’ two-stage Logos theology and its consequence for the nature of the Logos, I must address once again the question of theological language for their spatial images pervade their two-stage Logos theology. It is quite clear that the Apologists are not being literal in their spatial language of God. As I explored in the previous chapter, all of the Apologists have noted in different ways that God is beyond space, that he cannot be contained. Thus, it would not follow to literally state that God is a being *out of which* another being can emerge. Moreover, Theophilus is clearly being metaphorical when he describes the interior state of the Logos in stage one. For in one passage, he describes it as God’s bowels and in another passage, he describes it as God’s heart. Leaving aside the obvious difficulty of the gross

93 Aeby, *Missions Divines*, 19, Bentivegna, “Christianity without Christ,” 117–18, Curry, “Theogony of Theophilus,” 320–21, Grant, “Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus,” *HTR* 40, no. 4 (1947): 227–56, Spanneut, *Stoïcisme*, 310–12. The specific provenance of the distinction is not of immediate concern here, except to recognize that Theophilus has identified a convention in Greek philosophy that helps him hold in tension both the generation and the eternal nature of the Logos. The difficulty with the language, as I will suggest more fully momentarily, is that it does not offer a means of distinguishing the Logos from God in the first stage and, therefore, cannot maintain an eternally distinct, which is to say personal, existence of the Logos.

94 *Autol.* 2.22, Grant, 63.

95 “[God] said ‘Let us make’ to none other than his own Logos and his own Sophia.” *Autol.* 2.18, Grant, 57. I will return to Theophilus’ interpretation of Gen. 1:26, and the role of the Sophia in creation, in chapter four.

anthropomorphisms, which no Christian figure at this stage would endorse, the use of two different descriptions of the interior place indicates that both are metaphors to describe a deeper reality.

Nevertheless, while the interior/exterior language may be metaphorical, the truth that this language espouses, that of a two-stage existence of the Logos, remains. In the first stage, the logos exists as the logos of God and, therefore, indistinguishable from God—he does not do anything in this stage that necessitates a separated existence. The reality of this stage is expressed by the metaphorical language of interiority. In the second stage, inaugurated by the generation, the Logos separates from God and becomes, for the first time, a definable entity alongside the Father. The reality of this stage is expressed by the metaphorical language of exteriority. The spatial language that the Apologists adopt to express the divine transcendence is, thus, carried through in descriptions of the Logos. As the separated Logos, he is now free to move and work and be visible in creation.

Two-stage Logos theology in the Apologists' writings may be defined as the manner in which the Apologists hold in tension the eternality of the Second Person with his generation that otherwise would imply a beginning point. As such, two-stage Logos theology entails a shift in the quality of existence from the impersonal rationality of God to a separated, personal, divine entity. Further, two-stage Logos theology is predicated upon a spatial conception of God, such that the Logos can be conceived as physically coming out of God to work in the world and thereby to bridge the gap between God and the world. While the spatial language is metaphorical, the meaning its use induces, that of a God not intimately involved in the affairs of humanity, is not.

The strengths of two-stage Logos theology for the purposes of the Apologists' occasion lie in the precedence for such language in philosophical sources, as well as the construct's ability to speak of God/Father and Logos/Son at once as one (in their eternal relationship) and distinct (in relation to creation). This latter point in turn allows for the identification of the earthly Messiah with the divine, eternal Logos, a connection best witnessed in the *Dial.* Justin already had shown that the Logos is divine and distinct in its pre-existent state as God's own logos, so he is able to argue in support of the divinity of Jesus the Messiah. The latter argument depends on the former argument's establishment via two-stage Logos theology.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, from a Trinitarian perspective, the weaknesses in this scheme are palpable. First, although the

96 The missing step, of course, is the question of how the pre-existent Christ becomes incarnate in a man, a difficult subject for Trypho to be sure, but a subject that goes beyond the limits of the current discussion.

Apologists can account for the eternal nature of the Logos, the Logos does not exist eternally as a separate entity. Indeed, the separated, personal Logos has a beginning point in time, sometime shortly before the creation of the world.⁹⁷ Concurrently, the generation of the Logos depends upon his work as agent of creation. If God had not willed to create the world, he would not have needed to generate his internal logos as a separate entity.

Thus, the Apologists' speculation on the generation of the Logos results in the Logos' diminished or lesser divinity when compared to the divinity of God. This conclusion aligns with the conclusions drawn from my study of the Apologists' Logos theology in general. The Logos is divine, and as such, he can work on behalf of God in the world. Nevertheless, it is precisely the lesser or diminished divinity of the Logos, resulting from his temporal generation, that allows him to appear in the material cosmos as the agent of its creation, the voice in Eden, or the presence in the burning bush. The difficulties of this two-stage conception, however, would not become fully palpable until they were exploited by the literalness of 'Gnostic' theology. These circumstances meant that Irenaeus, despite his emphasis on passing on what was handed to him, would be forced to move in a different direction with his Logos theology.

Irenaeus

Logos Theology

Despite the prevalence of the title 'Logos' in his work, Irenaeus rarely is considered a Logos theologian.⁹⁸ The reason for this neglect in the scholarship of most of the twentieth century was an assumption that Logos theology, as a product of a 'Hellenistic mind,' was out of place in the 'biblical thought' of Irenaeus.⁹⁹

97 Daniélou calls this conception a "measure of modalism." Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 352. Ultimately, the problem is not modalism—when the Logos works in creation, he works as a separate entity. The problem instead, as I have already suggested above, and will reiterate in chapter five below, is the implication of subordinationism.

98 A notable exception here is Norris, *God and World*, 70–72. Nevertheless, Norris wrongly emphasizes the incoherence of Irenaeus' Logos theology (which, according to Norris, lies in the fact that the Logos is at once a mediator and God himself) while failing to draw out the nuances of Irenaeus' thought when compared to Justin's. Moreover, Norris claims that Irenaeus "deliberately evades the issue of the 'generation' of the Logos," a position I will dispute below. Norris, *God and World*, 71.

99 Jaroslav Pelikan offers a good summation of this position in the following statement, "Although Irenaeus was not unacquainted with the apologetic doctrine of the Logos, he made relatively little use of it. The use of the idea of Logos in Revelation 19:13 should

As more recent scholarship rightly has noted, the lines between the two ways of thinking were more blurred than this caricature allows.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, more recent studies continue to marginalize Irenaeus' Logos theology through their exclusive focus on the work of the Second Person in the incarnation, a factor not unrelated to the lack of interest in his Trinitarian thought.

The difficulty with Irenaeus' Logos theology is the lack of a clear motive for its use. As previously noted in accord with the majority of scholarship, the Apologists were drawn to Logos theology because it provided a point of contact with the Greeks and because of its ability to answer the question of how a transcendent God could work in the material world. With Irenaeus, these motivating factors are not present. His purpose is not to show where Christianity aligns with the assumptions of Greek philosophy. Moreover, I argued in chapter two that Irenaeus understands God as the Fullness in whom dwells the material world; as a result, Irenaeus does not need to affirm a gap between God and the material creation in order to maintain the divine transcendence because he interprets transcendence absolutely as opposed to relatively. In theory, God is free to work in creation apart from a mediator.¹⁰¹ Thus, his understanding of God does not result in the same need for a mediating figure. Nevertheless, it is not the case that Irenaeus' Logos theology is simply a contradiction of which he was not aware, as some past scholars have claimed.¹⁰² Rather, it provides the logic for much of his understanding of the nature of the Second Person and the nature of the Second Person's relationship to God, both of which dictate the parameters in which his positive, 'biblical theology' regarding the Second Person's work in the economy moves.

Irenaeus is drawn to the title 'Logos' because of its prior use within Valentinianism.¹⁰³ According to Irenaeus' exposition in the first chapters of *Haer.* 1, the Valentinians used 'Logos' as a title for two central figures within their convoluted protological drama. First, 'Logos' is a title of one of the original 30 Aeons of the divine *Pleroma* or Fullness. Specifically, he is the fourth emanation in order from the First-Father, and as such, he stands at an ontologi-

have shown that there was a place in the language of the church for a conception of this idea which owed very little to philosophical speculation." Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, repr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 187.

100 On this point, see Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 148–51.

101 For a review of the argument, see above pp. 80–90.

102 Lawson, *Biblical Theology*, 135.

103 This is Fantino's primary thesis as well. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, esp. ch. 3.

cal and epistemological distance from the First-Father.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, ‘Logos’ is an alternate title for the Aeon principally called ‘Savior,’ the product of all 30 Aeons.¹⁰⁵ In some interpretations, this latter figure, working through the Demiurge, serves as the instrumental cause of an unintended and inherently evil material creation.¹⁰⁶ Irenaeus found both versions of this Logos theology at odds with the traditional use of Logos as handed down from the apostles, most notably its use in the fourth Gospel. Nonetheless, since the title was part of the apostolic inheritance, Irenaeus does not intend to relinquish it to his opponents anymore than he wants to relinquish the fourth Gospel. Therefore, Irenaeus employs ‘Logos’ as a christological title in order to reclaim the title as the rightful property of the church.

For Irenaeus, as for Justin, the Logos is a mediating agent who works in the world prior to the incarnation in two primary ways, as Creator and as Revealer. Texts that attest to the instrumental use of the Logos in the work of creation, or to the Logos as Creator, abound throughout the five books of *Haer.* and *Epid.*, showing the fundamental importance of this pre-incarnational work to the nature of the Logos in Irenaeus’ understanding. Irenaeus writes, “[B]y the Logos [God] created [*condidit*] and made [*fecit*] all things . . .”¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere he writes, “[W]e should know that he who made [*fecit*] and formed [*plasma-vit*] and breathed in them the breath of life, and nourishes us by creation, establishing [*confirmans*] all things by his Logos, and binding them together by his Sophia—this is he who is the only true God . . .”¹⁰⁸ In certain contexts, the creative work of the Logos occurs in a statement of fundamental Christian belief. For example, in a *regula* statement in *Haer.* 1, Irenaeus writes, “But we hold to the rule of truth, namely, that there is one God Almighty, who created [*condidit*] all things through His Logos . . .”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, he writes in *Haer.* 3, “[T]here is one God, who made [*fecit*] all things by his Logos.”¹¹⁰ Other examples include, “from the beginning the Logos created [*condidit*] and made [*fecit*] them” and “For the Creator of the world truly is the Logos of God” and

104 *Haer.* 1.1.1–2.

105 *Haer.* 1.2.6.

106 Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 171–75. Fantino's primary text for this understanding comes not from Irenaeus' report but from a fragment of Heracleon. Nonetheless, certain aspects of *Haer.* 1 also tend toward this interpretation of the creative work of the 'Gnostic' Logos, notably *Haer.* 1.4.5.

107 *Haer.* 2.2.4.

108 *Haer.* 3.24.2. For the full Latin of this passage, see below p. 169n73.

109 *Haer.* 1.22.1.

110 *Haer.* 3.11.1.

“God is verbal, therefore He made created things by the Word . . .”¹¹¹ To these examples, numerous others could be added, but these texts, drawn from each of the books of *Haer.* and *Epid.* suffice to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the Logos as Creator theme in Irenaeus’ works.

The underlying truth expressed in these texts was witnessed also in the Apologists’ Logos theology, namely, God is the Creator proper, but he creates through the medium or agent of the Logos, an action which, subsequently, shows the divine status of the Logos. Furthermore, Irenaeus likewise is adamant that the presence of a divine agent through whom God creates is witnessed in the scriptures, and he employs many of the same passages as the Apologists in support. For example, Irenaeus predominantly uses John 1:1–3 (*Haer.* 2.2.5, 3.8.3) and Psalm 33/2:6 (*Haer.* 1.22.1, 3.8.3, *Epid.* 5) both of which Theophilus cited. Moreover, Irenaeus interprets the ἀρχή in Genesis 1:1 as the Logos, an interpretation also witnessed in Theophilus’ work (*Epid.* 43).

Nonetheless, the use of δυνάμις language which marked the Apologists’ argument in favor of this truth is absent from Irenaeus’ argument, and this absence represents a central divergence between the Apologists’ and Irenaeus’ respective understandings of the nature of the Logos. The reason for the lack of ‘power’ language in Irenaeus’ discussion of the Logos’ creative work again can be traced to his polemic with the Valentinians. Δύναμις, most often rendered *virtus* by the Latin translator,¹¹² was a fixture of the vocabulary of Valentinianism, or at least, in the vocabulary Irenaeus uses to describe Valentinian thought. Primarily, ‘power’ language occurs repeatedly in Irenaeus’ description of the Valentinian topological understanding of the Divine Fullness. For example, this term in the singular often refers to the First-Father¹¹³ or to one of the Aeons of the Fullness in Valentinian teaching.¹¹⁴ Used in the plural form, it also refers to the Aeons or to a certain number of Aeons as a whole.¹¹⁵ The Valentinians likely used the term to describe the Demiurge. For example, Irenaeus writes, “[The Valentinians] believe, on the contrary, that Angels or

¹¹¹ *Haer.* 4.10.2, 5.18.3, and *Epid.* 5, Behr, 43.

¹¹² Reynders, *Lexique*, 60.

¹¹³ *Haer.* 1.12.4, 1.13.6, 1.15.2, 5, 1.16.3, 1.21.2, 1.21.4, 123.3. This is not an exhaustive list (as with ns 114 and 115).

¹¹⁴ *Haer.* 1.3.3, 1.3.5, 1.11.3–4, 1.12.1, 1.14.5, 1.24.4, 2.20.1.

¹¹⁵ *Haer.* 1.11.1, 1.18.1, 1.21.3, 3.16.1. Thomassen notes Irenaeus’ prevalent use of δυνάμεις in *Haer.* 1.11.1 to describe the spiritual beings most often called Aeons in *Haer.* 1.11–3 as evidence of a distinctive Valentinian tradition in *Haer.* 1.11.1. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 204–5. The observation suggests a real preference for δυνάμις language in some Valentinian communities, as opposed to what might otherwise be thought as Irenaeus’ personal preference for δυνάμις as a description of Valentinian doctrine.

some other Power [*Virtus*] separate from God and ignorant of him made this universe."¹¹⁶ Regardless of whether power language is original to Valentinian vocabulary, this evidence demonstrates that in Irenaeus' mind, δύναμις is linked to Valentinian descriptions of the Aeons.

While not opposed to taking a title or term characteristic of Valentinian theology and rehabilitating it for his own thought, as demonstrated with his use of 'Father,' 'Logos,' and as we will see in the next chapter with 'Sophia,' Irenaeus does not employ the same rehabilitation tactic with δύναμις. Unlike the Apologists, he never describes the Logos as a Power or the Power of God.¹¹⁷ In contrast, Irenaeus more often associates δύναμις language with entities that are created by God. He writes, "God has no need of anything since by the Logos he created and made all things, needing neither Angels as assistants to make the things that are made, *nor any other Power [Virtute] much inferior to himself and ignorant of the Father...*"¹¹⁸ Elsewhere, he writes, "Therefore, it was not angels who made us or formed us, for neither angels nor anyone else except the Logos of God, nor any power [*virtus*] far distant from the Father of the universe had power to make an image of God."¹¹⁹ Likewise, in several uses of Psalm 33/2:6, Irenaeus speaks of the Logos (and the Sophia) creating the powers, in conformity with the Psalmist's use of the word.¹²⁰

The absence of δύναμις language, therefore, may suggest that it is not in virtue of a lesser divinity that the Logos creates. Possibly, Irenaeus leaves this divine title to the Valentinians because he is aware of the Middle Platonic (and Apologetic) significance of δύναμις and deems it inadequate to describe the nature of the Logos. Another possibility explaining the absence of δύναμις language is that Irenaeus does not find a good scriptural precedence for 'Power' as

¹¹⁶ *Haer.* 2.11.1.

¹¹⁷ In several places, Irenaeus speaks of God having power and of God creating by his power (e.g., *Haer.* 2.10.4, 2.30.9, 4.38.3). These passages could be interpreted as referring to the Logos as the Power of God in a Middle Platonist context. Nonetheless, in these passages that refer to God's creative power, Irenaeus avoids linking this power and the entity he has elsewhere called the Logos, that is the Second Person. Irenaeus rather speaks more generally of an attribute of God. Likewise, in passages where he speaks of God creating through the Logos, he does not use the language of power.

¹¹⁸ *Haer.* 2.2.4, italics added.

¹¹⁹ *Haer.* 4.20.1. Here the language of "far distant" (*longe absistens*) invokes the Valentinian understanding of the Aeons as spatially separated from the First-Father, as I described above pp. 32–34. *Absistens*, from *absum*, can also have the sense of 'difference' in which case the 'power' in question would be described as, not only spatially distant, but ontologically distant from the First-Father.

¹²⁰ *Haer.* 3.8.3, *Epid.* 5

a divine title, as he did for 'Father' and for 'Logos.'¹²¹ Whatever the reason, the lack of δύναμις language suggests that Irenaeus' Logos theology ought not to be interpreted along the same lines as the Middle Platonists' and Apologists' use of Logos, which, as we saw, implied a contrast between God and the Logos and ultimately affirmed the Logos' diminished divinity.

Unfortunately, Irenaeus does not give a good reason or argument (corresponding to the δύναμις argument of the Apologists) as to why God creates, or needs to create, through a mediator. In a sense, he has more of a need to explain the presence of mediators than the Apologists do because, as opposed to the Apologists' understanding of divine transcendence that necessitated the existence of a lesser, intermediate power alongside of God through which he works in the world, Irenaeus' understanding of the divine transcendence allowed him to affirm that material creation could be in God, as its Fullness, without compromising his divinity. Thus, the transcendent God in Irenaeus' understanding could create all things without the use of a mediator.

Although Irenaeus does not provide a reasoned argument for the presence of an agent in creation, his likely motive for adopting the mediating language is simply its presence in scripture. For example, he identifies the presence of the mediating Logos as a mark of Paul's theology when he writes, "[T]he apostle [Paul] in the first place taught the Gentiles . . . to depart from the superstition of idols and to worship one God, the Maker [*Factor*] of heaven and earth, and the Fashioner [*Fabricatorem*] of the whole creation and, moreover that his Son was his Logos, by whom he created [*condidit*] all things . . ."¹²² Likewise, he cites John as a scriptural authority to this truth, writing, "For it is a characteristic of the preeminence of God, to not need another instrument for the creation of those things which are made. His own Logos is both suitable and sufficient for the formation of all things, as John, the disciple of the Lord, declares of him: 'All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made.'"¹²³ Significantly, Irenaeus' only attempt to justify the apparent contradiction that the God who stands in no need of instrumentality creates through the Logos is his reference to scripture.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the mediation of the

121 Although a scriptural precedence indeed exists, namely 1 Cor. 1:24, Irenaeus never uses this verse in his works. The lack of this verse is significant given that it also calls Christ the "Wisdom of God," a title Irenaeus attributes to the Spirit.

122 *Haer.* 4.24.1.

123 *Haer.* 2.2.5. The scriptural passage he cites is John 1:3. See also *Haer.* 3.8.3.

124 Irenaeus' work is replete with passages containing the conflicting ideas that God creates by himself and that he creates through the Logos with, likewise, no explanatory comment. See *Haer.* 2.30.9 and 4.7.4. The same truth resides in Irenaeus' 'hands of God' passages

Logos in creation is traditional, indicated by its strong presence in the *regula* passages, above all, that of *Epid.* 6. Irenaeus writes, “And this is the order of our faith, the foundation of [the] edifice and the support of [our] conduct: God, the Father, uncreated, uncontainable, invisible, one God, the Creator of all: this is the first article of our faith. And the second article: the Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was revealed by the prophets according to the character of their prophecy and according to the nature of the economies of the Father, by whom all things were made . . .”¹²⁵

Unlike the Apologists, then, the mediating work of the Logos in creation stems not from a Middle Platonic notion imposed upon scripture; instead, Irenaeus’ source for the language is scripture. As such, the notion of mediation is not dictated by the use of philosophy, and Irenaeus is free to make the language work for him in other ways. Notably, the logic of the mediation of the Logos in creation does not force Irenaeus to posit a diminished divinity of the Logos in relation to God. In fact, given Irenaeus’ understanding of God, his participation in creation suggests the Logos’ full and equal divinity with God. As Fantino convincingly has shown, and as I will return to in more detail in the next section, for Irenaeus, the Logos’ creative action places him on the side of God in this Creator/creature divide.¹²⁶

The second pre-incarnational function of the Logos in Irenaeus’ work is his role as the sole Revealer of God/Father. Irenaeus believes that the unique identity of the Second Person as the divine Logos/Son¹²⁷ of the Father gives him this ability, both prior to and during the incarnation:

For no one is able to know the Father without the Logos of God, that is, unless by the Son revealing [him]; nor can anyone know the Son without

where Irenaeus affirms that God creates by himself, but explains this as a creation with God’s two hands, the Son and the Spirit. See, for example, *Haer.* 4.20.1 and 5.28.4.

¹²⁵ *Epid.* 6, Behr, 43.

¹²⁶ Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 339–44.

¹²⁷ The reader will note that I have changed my nomenclature of the Second Person from Logos to Logos/Son (and the corresponding change of the First Person from God to God/Father). This change is intentional as it reflects that, unlike the creative function, both titles are used by Irenaeus in describing the revelatory work of the Second Person as it traverses the pre-incarnational (Logos) and incarnational (Son) modes of the Second Person’s existence. (See above p. 92n1 for Irenaeus’ general use of these two titles.) Per the limits of the current chapter, I will focus primarily on the pre-incarnational revelatory work of the Logos/Son, although in Irenaeus’ understanding, this work culminates in the incarnation.

the approval of the Father. But the Son accomplishes the good pleasure of the Father: for the Father sends, and the Son is sent, and comes. And his Logos himself knows that the Father is, as to us, invisible and infinite, and since he is indescribable, [the Logos] does himself describe him to us; and on the other hand, only the Father knows his Logos. And both these truths the Lord has manifested. And because of this the Son reveals the knowledge of the Father through his manifestation. For the manifestation of the Son is the knowledge of the Father; for all things are manifested through the Logos.¹²⁸

As the manifestation of the Father, elsewhere the Logos/Son is called the “knowledge of the Father,”¹²⁹ the “measure of the Father”¹³⁰ “the comprehensible” and “the visible” of an “incomprehensible” and “invisible” Father,¹³¹ and the one who “did show the Father’s brightness.”¹³² As these passages demonstrate, Irenaeus believes that the justification for the revelatory role of the Logos/Son is his unique relationship to God/Father that allows those who look at the Logos/Son to see and know God/Father. Irenaeus expresses the exceptional quality of this relationship with the filial language of scripture.¹³³

Irenaeus’ Logos theology also factors largely in the revelatory function for, as noted previously, ‘Logos’ names the Second Person in his pre-incarnate state where he is also active in revealing the Father. Indeed, Irenaeus adds Logos imagery to certain interpretations of scripture passages that invoke only Father-Son language in order to emphasize the continuity of the revealing work of the pre-incarnational Logos and those actions performed by (or rather manifested in) the incarnate Son of God. For example, he writes, “For the Son is the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Son is in the Father and has been revealed through the Son. And because of this the Lord said: ‘No man knows the Son except the Father, nor the Father except the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal [Him].’ For ‘will reveal’ was said not only with respect to the future, as if at that time the Logos began to manifest the Father when He

¹²⁸ *Haer.* 4.6.3.

¹²⁹ *Haer.* 4.6.7.

¹³⁰ *Haer.* 4.4.2.

¹³¹ *Haer.* 3.11.5, 4.6.6.

¹³² *Haer.* 4.20.11.

¹³³ Nevertheless, the logic that supports Irenaeus’ contention is provided not by this filial language but by his Logos theology. This fuller analysis must await a description of Irenaeus’ understanding of the Logos’ generation. See below pp. 142–45.

was born of Mary, but it applies generally through all time.”¹³⁴ The scriptural quotation here is from Matthew 11:27, which his opponents used to show that the Son brought knowledge of an utterly new and heretofore unknown God.¹³⁵ In response, Irenaeus equates the incarnate Son with the pre-incarnate Logos to emphasize that the same God is being revealed.¹³⁶

As a result of the continuity Irenaeus emphasizes between the pre-incarnational Logos and incarnate Son, he often is vague regarding the time period of the economy to which he refers when addressing the revelatory function of the Second Person. Thus, in the context of explaining the revelatory work of the Second Person, he at times blurs the distinctive use of the titles.¹³⁷ However, like the Apologists before him, the passages he unequivocally identifies as examples of the pre-incarnational revelatory work of the Logos are the theophanies of the Jewish scriptures. Irenaeus writes, “Now the Logos of God Himself used to speak, in virtue of His divinity and glory, with the patriarchs who lived before Moses’ time.”¹³⁸ Likewise, in the *Epid.* he states, “[it is not] this One [God the Father] who, standing in a very small space, talked with Abraham, but the Word of God, who was always with mankind and who foretold things of the future, which were to come to pass, and taught men things of God.”¹³⁹ These passages demonstrate that Irenaeus understands the subject of the theophanies as the Logos, and the theophanies, like the words of the prophets, as works of revelation.

As noted in the first chapter, Justin influenced Irenaeus’ interpretation of the theophanic passages, namely the identification of the Logos as the entity who is seen or is present on earth.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Irenaeus departs from Justin’s interpretation in two ways that affect his understanding of the nature of the Second Person, namely, (1) the manner of the Logos’ theophanic appearance

134 “*Agnitio enim Patris Filius, agnitio autem Filii in Patre et per Filium revelata. Et propter hoc Dominus dicebat: Nemo cognoscit Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem nisi Filius, et quibuscumque Filius revelaverit. ‘Revelaverit’ enim non solum in futurum dictum est, quasi tunc inceperit Verbum manifestare Patrem cum de Maria natus, sed communiter per totum tempus positum est.*” *Haer.* 4.6.7. See also *Haer.* 4.20.7.

135 See Aeby, *Missions Divines*, 45–47.

136 In places, the opposite occurs as well, namely, Irenaeus adds filial language to passages that only possess Logos imagery. See *Epid.* 43.

137 See, for example, *Haer.* 4.7.2.

138 *Haer.* 3.11.8, ACW 64:57 with minor revisions.

139 *Epid.* 45, Behr 70.

140 In addition to the passages already cited, see *Haer.* 4.4.7, 4.5.2–5, 4.9.1, 4.20.9, and *Epid.* 44–46 for examples of Irenaeus’ interpretation of the theophanies. On the influence of Justin’s interpretation on Irenaeus, see above pp. 25–26.

and (2) the motivation for identifying the Logos, as opposed to the Father, as the figure present in the theophanies. In regards to the manner of the Logos' theophanic appearance, Justin interpreted the theophanies as the physical presence of the Logos who had separated from the Father in order to appear in material creation. Conversely, for Irenaeus, the theophanic visions are decidedly not *physical* appearances of the Logos, but rather, *prophetic* appearances which, according to his own definition of prophecy ("For prophecy is a prediction of future things, that is, a pre-showing [*praesignificatio*] of those things which will be afterwards"),¹⁴¹ cannot be physical. In other words, the theophanies foretell the coming reality of a physical manifestation of the Logos, but they are not a physical reality in and of themselves.

Passages where Irenaeus indicates the manner in which Septuagint figures, primarily the prophets, 'see' God infer this interpretation. For example, Irenaeus writes, "And therefore the prophets, receiving the prophetic gift from the same Logos, proclaimed his advent according to the flesh . . . the Logos of God foretelling from the beginning that God who will be present with his creation should be seen by humans and should converse with them on earth and should confer with them . . ."¹⁴² Irenaeus here emphasizes the *future* aspect of this physical appearance. If this physical manifestation occurs in the future, then the visions recorded in the Septuagint are qualitatively different from the visions of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Elsewhere, Irenaeus writes, "The prophets, therefore, did not plainly see God's face itself, but [they saw] the dispensations and the mysteries through which humans might begin to see God."¹⁴³ In another place, Irenaeus likens the visions of the Septuagint to the heralds of a coming king who is not yet physically present. He writes, "For the advent of the King is previously announced by those servants who are sent [before Him], in order to the preparation and equipment of those men who are to entertain their Lord."¹⁴⁴ These passages confirm that in Irenaeus' interpretation, God only is seen *physically* when the Logos is made flesh.

The link from these prophetic passages to the theophanic texts is the figure of Moses who is said to have seen the Logos in the theophany of Exodus 33:20–22. Nevertheless, this seeing is only partial for, as Irenaeus quotes

¹⁴¹ *Haer.* 4.20.5.

¹⁴² *Haer.* 4.20.4.

¹⁴³ *Haer.* 4.20.10.

¹⁴⁴ *Haer.* 4.34.1, ANF 1:511.

from Exodus, “no man sees my *face* and shall live.”¹⁴⁵ The partial glory of the theophany, thus, is in line with the prophetic seeing he has developed, and the key to understanding the theophanic vision is that Moses does not see God’s face. Irenaeus proceeds to contrast Moses’ theophanic/prophetic vision in the Exodus account with the physical vision of the incarnate Christ given to the disciples on Mt. Tabor and recorded in the synoptic Gospels. Irenaeus writes of that vision that the Logos/Son “conversed with [Moses] *face to face* on top of the mountain, with Elias also standing near as the Gospel reported, making good in the end the original promise.”¹⁴⁶ The presence of Moses with Jesus on Mt. Tabor underscores the contrast between the *kind* of seeing that occurs before and after the incarnation. Moses ‘sees’ God in both accounts; nevertheless, only in the second account was a physical manifestation of the Logos involved, only in the second account does Moses see the divine face. The physical presence of the incarnate Logos/Son on Mt. Tabor (and in the whole of the incarnation) fulfills the promise of the prophetic vision that God will one day be seen. Thus, continuity exists between the two visions, against the Valentinians and the Marcionites, but they are not identical.

Elsewhere, Irenaeus highlights the partialness of the theophanic visions by emphasizing their literary character. Accordingly, he alters the notion of the ‘Spermatikos Logos’ he found in Justin’s work. Irenaeus writes, “[I]mplanted everywhere in his Scriptures is the Son of God, one time, indeed, speaking with Abraham, another time with Noah while giving him the measurements, another time while asking after Adam, another time while inducing judgment on Sodom, and again when he is seen and directs Jacob on the journey, and speaks with Moses from the bush.”¹⁴⁷ Unlike Justin’s understanding, Irenaeus does not believe the Logos has been implanted as partial seeds in human beings any more than he has been seen physically in the theophanic accounts. By contrast, Irenaeus claims that the location of the implanting of the Logos is neither history nor humanity, but scripture. Insofar as Christ is ‘seen’ in

145 Exod. 33:20 as quoted in *Haer.* 4.20.9, italics added. Irenaeus elsewhere emphasizes Moses’ speaking with the Logos in the burning bush theophany. *Haer.* 4.10.1 and *Epid.* 43.

146 *Haer.* 4.20.9, italics added.

147 “... *inseminatus est ubique in Scripturis ejus Filius Dei, aliquando quidem cum Abraham loquens, aliquando cum Noe, dans ei mensuras, aliquando autem quarens Adam, aliquando autem Sodomitae inducens judicium, et rursum cum videtur, et in viam dirigit Jacob, et de rubo loquitur cum Moyse.*” *Haer.* 4.10.1. The ANF translates *cum videtur* as “when he becomes visible,” which implies a distinction between the final two appearances and the first four appearances in which the Logos merely speaks (and presumably only is heard). The distinction is not present in the Latin, suggesting that Irenaeus finds in all of these examples places where the Logos is witnessed or ‘seen’ in the text.

his fullness prior to the incarnation, he is 'seen' in the scripture that testifies about him.

Irenaeus' language suggests that the Jewish patriarchs did see something in the theophanic/prophetic manifestations of the Logos. In the previous example, Irenaeus does not negate scripture's account that Moses 'saw' the backside of God in Exodus 33. Nevertheless, the content of the vision differs between theophanic/prophetic visions and incarnational visions. The Logos is 'seen' in both instances, but in the former, the Logos is not seen in his physical humanity. In *Haer.* 5, Irenaeus clarifies his understanding of the object seen in the theophanic/prophetic visions by likening them to the 'docetic' christologies of his opponents:

Vain indeed are those who allege that [Christ] appeared [in the incarnation] in mere seeming. For these things [the actions of the incarnate Christ] were done not in appearance only, but in actual reality... But I have already remarked that Abraham and the other prophets beheld him after a prophetic manner, foretelling in vision what should come to pass. If, then, such a being has now appeared in outward semblance different from what he was in reality [as docetic christologies hold], *there has been a certain prophetic vision made to men*; and another advent of His must be looked forward to...¹⁴⁸

In other words, if the spiritual Christ truly did not assume flesh, but only appeared human, then humans living at the time of Jesus 'saw' him in the same manner in which the prophets 'saw' him, which is to say, not physically. This comparison suggests that Irenaeus understands a theophanic/prophetic vision as a sight of something perceived to be 'out there' but which in fact is not. That which is 'seen' is a mental or spiritual vision as if it were sensible, but in reality it is an interior vision through the eyes of the mind.

¹⁴⁸ *Haer.* 5.1.2, ANF 1:527, italics added. Barnes offers a similar interpretation of the type of 'seeing' of Christ prior to the incarnation, although the difference in the quality of seeing is muted insofar as Barnes emphasizes the unity of the materiality of the visions. He writes, "God can be known only through sensibles, which range from the created cosmos to his actions in history to his imperfect image (man), and, finally, to his perfect Image, the Word in flesh." Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 89. The emphasis on the materiality of the visions is noteworthy and certainly 'Irenaeian,' but Barnes fails to note the degree to which Irenaeus qualifies the materiality of the pre-incarnational visions with his understanding of the nature of prophecy and his comparison of these prophetic visions to the non-material, docetic christologies of his opponents.

Conversely, according to Irenaeus' understanding, the incarnation marks the foretold time when the Logos would fully and physically appear in reality. In the incarnation, the Logos fully assumed flesh such that humans can see God physically for the first time. Irenaeus writes, "What then of the new thing the Lord brought by his coming? Recognize that he brought all possible newness [*omnem novitatem*] when he brings himself who had been announced."¹⁴⁹ For Irenaeus, despite its continuity with creation and the story of Israel, the incarnation marks an unprecedented revelatory event.

In regards to the motivation for identifying the Logos, as opposed to the Father, as the figure present in the theophanies, Irenaeus also departs from Justin. I showed above that Justin's motivation for identifying the Logos in the theophanies is the transcendence of the Father which, according to Justin's understanding of transcendence, precluded the Father from "[making] himself visible in a little spot on earth."¹⁵⁰ The Logos, then, is the one who appears on earth and he is able to do so by virtue of his lesser divine nature. Irenaeus displays no such motive for identifying the Logos as the figure present in the theophanies. First, as I have noted previously, his understanding of transcendence does not prohibit God from being active in the material world—God's transcendence is absolute which allows him to contain all things without compromising his distinction from material creation. Second, and more to the point in this context, Irenaeus' argument that the theophanic appearances

149 *Haer.* 4.34.1. The interpretation of Irenaeus' understanding of the pre-incarnational appearances of the Logos is an open question in scholarship. My position has been argued by, to name some prominent examples, Aeby, *Missions Divines*, 44–49, Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 114–20, Houssiau, *Christologie*, 80–104, and Réal Tremblay, *La manifestation et la vision de Dieu selon saint Irénée de Lyon* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 71–76. The opposing view, held most notably by Orbe, states that the appearances of the Son in the theophanies are not qualitatively different from his appearance in the incarnation. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 657–58. According to Orbe, the interpretation of these appearances as prophetic does not account for the anti-Valentinian and anti-Marcionite polemic in which Irenaeus' discussion of the theophanic appearances are located because the Valentinians and Marcionites believed that the Son did not appear until the New Testament. Therefore, the force of Irenaeus' argument for the continuity of the Testaments, Orbe says, depends on the literal appearance of the Logos/Son in the Old Testament. Orbe's argument works only on the level of theory and fails to address the actual texts such as those I cite above. Orbe simply does not account for the texts that clearly state that the theophanic/prophetic visions are nonphysical. Moreover, Orbe's interpretation has no way of showing the newness of the incarnation in Irenaeus' scheme. Without a qualitative difference in the appearances of the Logos before and after the human birth, the incarnation cannot be the special, unique revelation that Irenaeus everywhere emphasizes it is.

150 *Dial.* 60.2.

were prophetic and not physical eliminates the logic that necessitates a lesser divine being as the agent of revelation. For the divine being who appears in the theophanies remains invisible in the proper sense.

In Irenaeus' understanding, then, the Logos did not appear on earth because he could be contained and the Father could not be contained. In fact, the Logos, like the Father, is invisible by nature.¹⁵¹ Rather, the Logos is the subject of the theophanies because he is the same subject who is incarnated in Jesus Christ and the incarnation is a continuation of the work of revelation that started in the beginning of the economy—it is always the work of the Logos/Son, no matter the time of the economy, to reveal God/Father. The implications of this reading of the theophanies for Irenaeus' understanding of the nature of the Logos are manifest and crucial to the whole of his Trinitarian theology. Prior to assessing his understanding, however, I must first engage Irenaeus' thoughts regarding the Logos' generation.

The Generation of the Logos

Absent from Irenaeus' works is any explanatory passage or straightforward account of the generation of the Logos in the manner witnessed in the Apologists' works. The reason for such an absence seems clear: Irenaeus believed that scripture was silent regarding the generation of the Logos. As a result, such consideration was beyond the scope of proper theological inquiry. He writes, "If, then, anyone should ask us, How was the Son emitted by the Father? we reply, No one understands this emission, or generation, or calling, or manifestation, whatever name one might call his ineffable generation."¹⁵² Accordingly, Irenaeus does not discuss the generation, as the Apologists do, in order to explain the contradiction of the belief in one God and the belief in a second and distinct divine figure of the Logos, although this difficulty proved acute for Irenaeus as well. Apparently, he leaves this difficulty, along with the generation, a mystery.

Nevertheless, it is not the case, as has been maintained in past scholarship, that Irenaeus has no conception of the Logos' generation. Indeed, he believed the Valentinians' principle error to lie precisely in their detailed description of

151 *Haer.* 4.24.2. See also *Haer.* 3.16.6, 3.29.2, 5.16.2, and 5.18.3.

152 "Si quis itaque nobis dixerit: Quomodo ergo Filius prolatus a Patre est? dicimus ei quia prolationem istam, siue generationem, siue nuncupationem, siue adapertionem, aut quolibet quis nomine vocaverit generationem eius inenarrabilem exsistentem, nemo novit. . ." *Haer.* 2.28.6, ACW 65:90. The Latin demonstrates that Irenaeus includes a catalog of the language his opponents used to describe the generation of the Logos—*prolatio*, *generatio*, *nuncupatio*, *adapertio*—rejecting all of them as inadequate.

the emanation of divine beings. Thus, he engages in a lengthy polemic against this theory. In the process, Irenaeus expresses reasons for why the human analogies the Valentinians use to describe emanation fall short of describing the divine nature. Moreover, Irenaeus puts forth several of his own analogies for emanation.¹⁵³ Although Irenaeus in principle denies all of these analogies, as he does all human analogy used of God, his use of them to discount the Valentinian theory is derived from what he believes the nature of a being emitted from the Most High God would be. Therefore, these analogies, as well as his reasons for rejecting them, are quite telling to his understanding of the nature of the Logos in general.¹⁵⁴ Irenaeus' polemic against the Valentinian theory of emission or emanation, therefore, provides the necessary starting point for the present inquiry.¹⁵⁵ I have touched briefly on the Valentinian protology myth, which entailed the belief in a divine *Pleroma* or Fullness comprised of a set of 30 Aeons.¹⁵⁶ A short review in the present context will be helpful.

The Valentinians believed that the Aeons were emanations or productions from successive Aeon pairs ultimately stemming from the First Aeon, the Most High God. This theory of emission or emanation (προβαλή) implied the separation that supports their dualistic system. Each Aeon emanated or physically separated out of the Aeon pair preceding it in time and space from the First Aeon, thereby resulting in significant spatial and epistemological distances between the Aeons one to another and between each of the Aeons and the First Aeon, as well as a corresponding lessening of the ontological quality of divinity.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the last Aeon emitted, Sophia, falls into error out of ignorance

153 These analogies are (1) rays from the sun or light from light, (2) living beings from other living beings (typified by animals and humans), and (3) branches from a tree. These analogies, appearing in *Haer.* 2.17.2–8 are addressed in reference to the manner of emanation of the Aeons coming after the first eight Aeons, or the Ogdoad, the emanation of which is discussed under the human noetic analogy.

154 In the latter part of this section, I will be concerned with the light from light analogy the truth of which, as Orbe rightly notes, Irenaeus never explicitly denies. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 651.

155 Barnes uses a similar indirect method in relation to Irenaeus' conception of the Logos' generation. Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 81–85. Conversely, Orbe severs the polemic of *Haer.* 2 from any positive notion of the generation in Irenaeus and refuses to draw any inferences from *Haer.* 2 for Irenaeus' positive understanding. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 640ff. Orbe's position is difficult to maintain. The presence of such a detailed critique of a theory of emanation necessitates, in my mind, some base positive understanding from which the alternate can deviate.

156 See above pp. 32–34.

157 *Haer.* 1.1.1, 2.1.4.

of the First Aeon, which results in a material world separated from the Most High God by the spatial increments existing between the emitted Aeons.

From this protological myth, Irenaeus correctly discerned that the Valentinians based their theory of the process of emanation on the human noetic process, an analogy provided them by the various names of the Aeons (Νοῦς, Λόγος, Σοφία and the like). Irenaeus writes, “They get [their notion about] an emission from human activity and rashly divine against God, as if they had discovered something great when they assert that Word was emitted by Mind.”¹⁵⁸ Thus, according to Irenaeus, the Valentinians taught that the Aeons emanated from the Most High God according to the logical sequence of that human noetic process: one thinks a word prior to speaking it, and the action of utterance constitutes that word’s separate beginning from the speaker. In this respect, the emanation order of the Aeons is crucial. Nous (Mind) is the first emanation from the unknown Father and his Ennoea (Thought). Subsequently, Logos and his partner Zoe (Word and Life) and Anthropos and his partner Ecclesia (Man and Church) emanate from Mind and his partner Aletheia (Truth).¹⁵⁹ All of reality flows from these eight fundamental components. Mind precedes all emanated and created reality in the same way that thinking precedes all other human processes in the human noetic or speech process.¹⁶⁰

Irenaeus’ entire polemic, the heart of which occurs in *Haer* 2.13, rests upon a categorical rejection of the human noetic or speech analogy as useful in understanding the generation of eternal beings. He rejects the analogy for several related reasons. First, the human noetic or speech analogy contradicts a simple divine nature. This argument is not separate from the one Irenaeus makes for the divine simplicity addressed in the previous chapter.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, it must be revisited briefly in the present context.¹⁶²

Irenaeus asserts that noetic processes, that is, the process of thoughts coming from a mind and, in turn, producing speech, are a determining factor of a compound nature. He writes, “These things [noetic processes] can certainly be spoken of in human beings, *since they are compound by nature*, consisting

158 *Haer.* 2.13.8, ACW 65:45.

159 *Haer.* 1.1.1. According to Irenaeus, this system is the Ptolemaean expression of Valentinianism. Although other Valentinian systems follow a different logic, the connection to the human noetic analogy remains constant through the various schools. For example, see his description of the doctrine of the followers of Colorbasus in *Haer.* 1.12.3.

160 *Haer.* 1.1.1.

161 See above pp. 86–89.

162 In what follows, many of the same Irenaean passages will be reviewed as well. While the content is the same, I am exploring it from a different angle.

of both a body and a soul. But those who assert that Ennoea was emitted from God, and Nous from Ennoea, and then from these Logos, are in the first place to be charged with improperly employing these emissions. Second, they describe these *human* affections, and passions, and mental tendencies [*hominum adfectiones et passions et intentiones mentis*], while being ignorant of God.”¹⁶³ Irenaeus makes the same point in the later summary chapters of *Haer.* 2:

[You Valentinians] reserve nothing for God, but you wish to announce the birth and production [*nativitates et prolationes*] both of God Himself, of His Ennoea, and of His Word, and Life, and Christ, taking these from none other than the mental condition of human beings. And you do not understand that you may indeed speak this way in regards to a human, who is a composite being . . . But since God is wholly mind, wholly reason, and wholly active spirit and wholly light, and always exists one and the same, as it is both beneficial for us to think of God, and as we learn from the Scriptures, such conditions and divisions can no longer be properly ascribed to Him.¹⁶⁴

In other words, noetic processes are characteristic of compound nature because they necessarily partition the nature of which they are apart. A human being has a mind that is a part of her but separate from, for example, her body. This person's mind in turn has a thought that is a separate part of the mind. This mind's thought in turn produces speech that is separate from the mind. Such processes can only be true of a compound or partitioned nature.

Thus, to assign these noetic processes to God by way of the analogy in effect partitions God's essence into different parts such that he is rendered compound—one part is Logos, one part is Mind, and the like. In contrast, God as a simple being means that his Mind is not one thing and his Logos another; instead, each of these titles describe the simple nature of God *in its entirety*. Irenaeus writes, “But God being wholly Mind and wholly Logos, what he thinks he speaks and what he speaks he thinks: for his Thought is his Logos, and his Logos is his Mind, and the Mind which contains all things, is

163 *Haer.* 2.13.3, italics added. The Latin translator varies between transliterating the Greek names of Aeons into Latin and supplying the Latin equivalent. My translations will reflect the differences. However, when referring to the Logos that is the Second Person, or when God is described as Logos, I will always use the Greek original ‘Logos,’ as opposed to the Latin translation *Verbum* for the sake of consistency.

164 *Haer.* 2.28.4.

the Father himself.”¹⁶⁵ For Irenaeus, because the divine being is simple and, therefore, properly Logos itself, the Logos’ generation cannot be conceived of as a division of the nature of God into parts, one assigned God and one assigned Logos.

A second difficulty with the human noetic or speech analogy is its implication of a beginning or starting point to the existence of the emitted being. If the Logos comes forth from Mind in the same way that an uttered word comes forth from a previous thought, then the Logos is necessarily later in time than the Mind. The Valentinians, Irenaeus writes, “transfer the generation of the uttered word of humankind to the eternal Word of God, and mark a beginning and an origin in the uttering [of the Word] as they do in their own word.”¹⁶⁶ This formula is contradictory to the divine nature, which has no such variance according to time. Irenaeus writes, “. . . in the God who is above all things, and who is wholly Mind and wholly Logos, as we have said, an emission with the type of order mentioned cannot exist, since he does not have in himself anything that is more ancient or of later origin, nor does he have in himself anything that belongs to another. Moreover, he continues to be absolutely equal and similar and one, so no such order of emission will follow.”¹⁶⁷ Elsewhere, he writes, “These, and like perfections, were not emitted according to a process of development, but are the names of perfections *that are always with God* [*earum virtutum quae semper sunt cum Deo appellationes sunt*] as far as it is possible and proper for humans to hear and speak of God.”¹⁶⁸ Just as the divine nature may not be partitioned into various parts, so also the divine nature may not be partitioned according to time for it admits of no such variance. From this argument then, it is clear that Irenaeus does not understand the Logos’ generation from the Father to constitute a temporal beginning of the existence of the Logos.

Irenaeus engages a third critique of the Valentinian theory of emanation in the context of divine simplicity, not connected directly with the human noetic analogy, but springing instead from the topological theology of the

¹⁶⁵ *Haer.* 2.28.5.

¹⁶⁶ “. . . qui generationem prolatiui hominum verbi transferunt in Dei aeternum Verbum, et prolationis initium donantes et genesim, quemadmodum et suo verbo.” *Haer.* 2.13.8, ACW 65:46. Unger speculates that the original Greek of *prolatiuius* was προφορικώς. Unger, *Against the Heresies*, Book 2, 128n10. If he is right, this passage is a specific rejection of the ἐνδιάθετος/προφορικώς distinction upon which the Apologists based their understanding of the generation.

¹⁶⁷ *Haer.* 2.13.8, ACW 65:45 with minor revisions.

¹⁶⁸ *Haer.* 2.13.9, ACW 65:46 with minor revisions, italics added.

Valentinians. As noted, the Valentinians held that when an Aeon was emitted, it separated out of its source and proceeded to exist at a considerable (spatial and epistemological) distance. Irenaeus finds such a conception of emanation illogical in reference to the simple divine nature. He writes, "For if [God] emitted Mind, then he who emitted Mind, according to them, is understood as compound and corporeal, so that God who emitted indeed is separate from the Mind which is emitted. But if they say that Mind was emitted from Mind, they cut apart and divide the Mind of God. And to where and from where was it emitted? For whatever is sent forth from any place, passes of necessity into some other."¹⁶⁹ The partitioning of God into parts assumes a place in which God is located and to which another emanated being may go. But, as I showed in the previous chapter, Irenaeus rejects all spatial imagery of God.

For Irenaeus, then, the generation cannot be understood as a literal separation of the Logos out of God—"a coming out from"—because this idea assumes a spatial understanding of the divine nature. Such a conception ultimately denies the spiritual nature of God and the understanding of the divine Fullness as encompassing all things. In this context, Irenaeus offers a suggestion of what a theory of emanation in keeping with the divine simplicity, and thus, devoid of spatial language, would result in. He writes, "Moreover, this emission [the Nous], as well as the Logos who is [emitted] from him will still be inside the Father, and similarly the rest of the Aeons [emitted] from the Logos."¹⁷⁰ As spiritual beings, all Aeons should remain in one another, despite the fact that Nous has its source in Father, Logos in Nous, and the like. Only if these beings are not separated by space can the divine nature remain simple. Significantly, Irenaeus here registers no problem in principle with the idea of two (or more) distinct entities existing in one another, a concept to which I will return momentarily.

Before addressing Irenaeus' own understanding, it is worthwhile to pause here and note the striking similarities between the Valentinian theory of emanation and the two-stage Logos theology of the Apologists. First, both rely on an analogy to human psychology in order to explain the process of generation. This analogy is operative in the Apologists' thought in the form of the interior/exterior distinction implied in Justin's analogy of the generation to human speech¹⁷¹ and fully expressed in Theophilus' λόγος ἐνδιάθετος / λόγος προφορικώς

¹⁶⁹ *Haer.* 2.13.5.

¹⁷⁰ *Haer.* 2.13.5.

¹⁷¹ Justin expressed reservations in the implications of the human analogy as well. Nonetheless, his reservations do not correspond to Irenaeus' reasons for rejecting it. Justin was concerned that the analogy did not distinguish adequately between God and

distinction. As a result, both the Valentinians and the Apologists conclude that the separate existence of the Aeon or Logos has a beginning point and is not an eternally distinct being. Second, both Valentinian emanation theory and two-stage Logos theology rest upon a spatial understanding of divinity: generation is understood as a separation of the generated being out of the one who generates.¹⁷² These similarities rendered two-stage Logos theology useless for Irenaeus in his polemic because Valentinian theology exposed its difficulties by carrying two-stage Logos theology's spatial implications to their logical, literal end. Therefore, Irenaeus was forced to forge a new path of understanding the relationship of God and his Logos, specifically in relation to the generation.¹⁷³

The critiques Irenaeus levels on the Valentinian theory of emanation (and, by proxy, two-stage Logos theology) provide two insights into Irenaeus' understanding of the generation of the Logos from God, which are, in conjunction with the functions of the Logos addressed above, instructive toward his understanding of the Logos' nature. First, for Irenaeus, unlike the Valentinians and Apologists, the generation of the Logos from God does not involve an element of time. Specifically, the Logos' generation does not equate to a starting point to his separate, personal existence. Irenaeus demonstrates this truth in his use of the light from light analogy in *Haer.* 2.17.4:

the Logos. Irenaeus shows no concern for this problem, which indicates that Irenaeus' opponents believed that the Aeons were distinct beings and were separated one from another, for Irenaeus, unlike Justin, does not have to argue for the distinction. What concerns Irenaeus is the implication that, by this analogy, the Logos has a starting point and is not eternal.

172 This conclusion is not enervated by my metaphorical interpretation of the Apologists' spatial language of God. It remains the case that they understand a shift in the existence of the Logos, which is conceptualized as a movement from 'in' the Father to 'out of' the Father.

173 Irenaeus' move from a two-stage to a single stage understanding of the existence of the Logos has been recognized in past scholarship, notably Harnack, *History of Dogma* 2:303–4, Prestige, *Patristic Thought*, 124–25, 127–28 and Wolfson, *Philosophy*, 198–201, but not always with the result of identifying an eternal existence of the Logos. Stead argues that the movement away from the analogy that likens the Logos' generation to the contrasting unspoken and spoken word is a significant development in the Christian understanding of the Trinity, but he fails to identify Irenaeus as the source of the development; he has Origen in mind. Stead, *Philosophy*, 156. Conversely, both Barnes and Fantino see Irenaeus' rejection of two-stage Logos theology as a significant aspect of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology and evidence of an eternally personal Son and Spirit. Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 76, 86–87 and Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 345–47.

For a torch that is lighted later will not have a different light from that which existed earlier. Wherefore, when the lights of these torches are brought together into one, they regain their original unity, since there results one light that existed even from the beginning. And one cannot tell that one is younger or older by the light itself—for the whole is one light—or by the torches themselves that received the light (for these were contemporaneous in their material substance, since the matter of the torch is one and the same), but only according to the lighting, since one was lit a short while ago, but another just now.¹⁷⁴

In other words, although one torch gives light and a second torch receives light, the second light has always burned because it burns with the same fire as its source.

Accordingly, both in his polemic and in his positive theology of *Haer.* 3–5 and *Epid.*, Irenaeus never speaks of the Logos having a beginning, even if only a beginning as an entity separate from the Father. Rather, he consistently refers to the Logos/Son as being present always with the Father. For example, he writes, “But the Son, who *always coexisted* with the Father, formerly and from the beginning always revealed the Father to angels and archangels and powers and virtues and all who God willed to be revealed.”¹⁷⁵ Elsewhere, he writes, “For not only before Adam, but also before all creation, the Logos glorified his Father, while remaining in him; and was himself glorified by the Father . . .”¹⁷⁶ The context of this passage is Irenaeus’ argument that God did not create Adam because he was in need of anything. The reason that God did not need Adam is precisely because the Logos was always with him. This statement stands in stark opposition to Theophilus’ account that God was alone in the Logos’ first stage, prior to the creation of the world.¹⁷⁷

Irenaeus does use ‘beginning’ language to refer to the Logos. Nevertheless, this ‘beginning’ language (*in principio*, *in initio*, ἐν ἀρχῇ) does not mark a starting point as such; rather, it represents a shorthand way of referring to the existence of the Logos prior to the creation of the world.¹⁷⁸ For example, he writes,

¹⁷⁴ *Haer.* 2.17.4, ACW 65:56–57.

¹⁷⁵ “*Semper autem coexistens Filius Patri olim et ab initio semper revelat Patrem et Angelis et Archangelis et Potestatibus et Virtutibus et omnibus quibus vult revelari Deus.*” *Haer.* 2.30.9, italics added.

¹⁷⁶ *Haer.* 4.14.1.

¹⁷⁷ *Autol.* 2.22.

¹⁷⁸ Irenaeus’ use of ‘beginning’ to refer to the existence of the Logos and God in the eternity prior to the creation of the world has precedence in the prologue of John,

"It has been shown that the Logos, who existed in the beginning with God . . ." ¹⁷⁹ Further, "And again [Moses] says, 'Blessed is He who was before He became man,' since, for God, the Son is [in] the beginning before the creation of the world . . ." ¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Irenaeus never says the Logos/Son "has a beginning," as he does with created things, but only that he is with God in the beginning or that he himself is the beginning. Irenaeus specifically underscores the difference between the Logos/Son and creatures near the end of *Haer.* 2:

If, however, anyone should find the reason for all things about which he inquired, let him remember that man is infinitely inferior to God, and that man has received grace only in part and is not yet equal or like to the Creator; and, unlike God, he cannot experience and know all things. On the contrary, to the degree that he who today was made and began to exist as creature is inferior to him who was not made and is always the same, to that degree he is inferior to him who made him, in knowledge and for investigating the reason of all things. For you, O man, are not uncreated, nor did you always coexist with God, as his own Logos did [*Non enim infectus es, o homo, neque semper coexistebas Deo, sicut proprium eius Verbum*] . . . ¹⁸¹

All Irenaean uses of 'beginning' in relation to the Logos, I suggest, must be read through this passage.

Moreover, this passage hints at another significant aspect of Irenaeus' Logos theology that strongly suggests an eternal nature of the Logos, namely, Irenaeus always places the Logos/Son on the side of God/Father in his famous Creator/creature divide. He is even clearer on this distinction in a statement from *Haer.* 3:

But the things that were established are distinct from Him [God] who established them; and the things that were created, from Him who created them. For He Himself is uncreated, without beginning and without end, in need of no one, self-sufficient, bestowing existence on all the rest. But the things made by Him have a beginning; and all things that have a

specifically John 1:1, a verse which Irenaeus claims to refer to the generation of the Logos in *Haer.* 3.11.8.

¹⁷⁹ *Haer.* 3.18.1.

¹⁸⁰ *Epid.* 43, Behr, 68. Irenaeus mistakenly attributes this phrase to Moses, although it never appears in the Pentateuch. See Behr, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 110n123 for a discussion regarding the original location of this quotation. See also Robinson, *Demonstration*, 101ff.

¹⁸¹ *Haer.* 2.25.3, ACW 65:83 with minor revisions.

beginning are also liable to dissolution, and are subject to, and in need of, Him who made them. So it is necessary that these things have a different appellation among those who have even a modicum of sense for distinguishing such matters, so that He who made all things, together with His Logos, is rightly called God and only Lord . . .¹⁸²

If the Logos is on the side of God, then he is by definition not subject to change or to becoming. The clear implication is that the Logos, like the Father, is eternal for only eternal things do not change. Therefore, the Logos exists eternally as a begotten and distinguished being alongside the Father, a positive understanding of the Logos' generation in line with his polemical rejection of the Valentinian theory of emanation.

Accordingly, Irenaeus nowhere links the generation of the Logos to his role in creation or revelation in the manner witnessed in the Apologists' theology. The Logos does not come forth *in order to* be the agent of creation; rather, he is eternally present with the Father, and in that eternal presence, he acts as both agent of creation and revealer of the Father. In this sense, Irenaeus' understanding of creation as occurring in one phase, as opposed to the two phases of creation envisioned by Theophilus, is important.¹⁸³ If Irenaeus worked with a two phase understanding of creation, that is, that God first creates unformed matter and subsequently gives that matter form, the implication would be that the Logos came forth from the Father precisely in order to give that unformed matter form.¹⁸⁴ However, as I argued above, Irenaeus understands the Father

182 *Haer.* 3.8.3, ACW 64:44 with minor revisions.

183 See above pp. 84–85.

184 Orbe argues just this point in *Procesión del Verbo* and in his article "San Ireneo y la creación de la material," *Gregorianum* 59 (1978): 71–127. However, his interpretation of Irenaeus' understanding of creation depends on a link to the Middle Platonic theory of creation with the Triad *materia-paradigma-demiurgo*, which he claims is reflected in Irenaeus' God-Logos-Sophia triad. Unfortunately, he provides no texts to substantiate the link. It seems that Orbe simply presupposes the link. Orbe, "San Ireneo," 77. Conversely, above I have described a conspicuous lack of Middle Platonic language in Irenaeus' descriptions of creation. Additionally, Irenaeus' one phase understanding of creation, supported by a growing number of scholars, precludes the parallel to a Middle Platonic triad of creation. Elsewhere, Orbe makes the same argument for the contingent existence of the Son in relation to his revelatory function. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 119. This position repeats an earlier claim by Harnack, who wrote, "The Son then exists *because* he gives a revelation . . . Irenaeus is [not interested] in saying anything about the Son, apart from his historical mission . . ." Harnack, *History of Dogma* 2:304, italics added. These arguments only can be maintained, however, if one omits *Haer.* 2 from consideration, as in fact Orbe

to create human beings through the Logos. The Logos is, thus, the agent of creation in his eternal presence with the Father.

Irenaeus never states that the Logos is generated from the essence of the Father, a formula that, according to later Trinitarian theology, would support an eternal existence of the Logos/Son. However, neither does Irenaeus say in the manner of the Apologists that the Logos is generated from the will of the Father, a formula that would certainly exclude an eternal existence of the Logos. Conversely, because Irenaeus severs the link between the Logos' generation and the functions he performs in the economy, he removes the need for a generation from or by the will of God and, therefore, eliminates the contingency of the distinct Logos. This move demonstrates Irenaeus' belief that the existence of the Logos is not functional, but is necessary and therefore eternal.¹⁸⁵

The biggest proponent against determining an eternal nature of the Logos from this polemic has been Antonio Orbe.¹⁸⁶ According to Orbe, Irenaeus only rejects the anthropomorphism implied in comparing the divine Logos to the human word because God is beyond such analogy, not because Irenaeus believes the Logos is eternal.¹⁸⁷ While Orbe is correct that the concern with anthropomorphism drives the polemic, he fails to note that Irenaeus nowhere denies the obvious implication of his rejection of the analogy, either in the polemic itself or in his more positive theology of the later books. Indeed, Irenaeus' polemic would not hold if he did not believe in an eternal Logos; rather, it is precisely the Logos' eternal nature that makes the human speech

does, for Irenaeus has much to say regarding the Logos/Son apart from his work in the economy in this book, not least of which is his plain statement in *Haer.* 2.30.9 that God and the Logos share an "eternal coexistence." While Irenaeus is most concerned in later books with the economy, nowhere does he suggest that the Logos exists *in order to* reveal the Father—Harnack and Orbe's inference is simply not grounded in Irenaeus' text. More to the point, this position misses the logic that supports Irenaeus' understanding of the Logos' role as unique revealer of the Father. For Irenaeus, the equality of the Logos with God qualifies him for the work of revealing the Father (and presumably necessitates their eternal coexistence). I will address this logic in more detail momentarily.

185 The interpretation of the Logos/Son's necessary existence is consonant with Irenaeus' use of the divine title 'Father.' See above pp. 73–75. If for Irenaeus the divine title 'Father' indicates not just something about God's work—that he is the Creator, for example—but the unique relationship between the First and Second Persons, then the existence of the Son is necessary to the essence of God.

186 Orbe's argument already has been thoroughly discounted by Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 343–56. Nevertheless, Fantino's argument has not been influential to the vast majority of works on Irenaeus, particularly those in English. Orbe's view remains influential and, thus, must be revisited here.

187 Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 122–23.

analogy problematic for understanding the generation. The failure to see the connection between the polemic and Irenaeus' positive theology in turn produces Orbe's view that for Irenaeus, the Logos is not eternal but only exists "before time."¹⁸⁸ Significantly, Orbe argues for this position not by bringing forward any Irenaeian texts in support, but by addressing the numerous texts that seem to support an eternal existence of the Logos in order to show how they could be interpreted as only supporting an existence that begins "before time." In the process, he inadvertently demonstrates the lack of Irenaeian texts that would directly support a temporal starting point of the Logos. The only text that Orbe can cite which directly supports his position is the controversial passage in *Epid.* 43 and the translation he uses has been discredited by Rousseau.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Orbe's argument shows that if one cannot accept his questionable presupposition that Irenaeus' polemic has no connection to his positive theology,

188 For the full argument, see Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 117–28.

189 Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 133–36. Orbe is followed in his interpretation by Ochagavía. Ochagavía, *Visibile Patris Filius*, 100. According to these scholars, *Epid.* 43 reads "And that there was born [*elanel*] a Son of God, that is, not only before the world was made, Moses, who was the first to prophesy, says in Hebrew: BARESITH BARA ELOVIM BASAN BENUAM SAMENTHARES, of which the translation is: A Son in the beginning God established then heaven and earth." Thus, according to this translation, the two phrases "there was born a Son of God" and "a Son in the beginning God established" are equated to conclude that Irenaeus means that God created a Son in the beginning in order to make heaven and earth. However, Rousseau has demonstrated that the original Greek of the verb rendered by the Armenian verb *elanel* could be either γίνομαι ('to be born') or ὑπάρχω ('to be'). Given the content from *Haer.* regarding the eternal nature of the Logos/Son, the latter is more likely the original indicating not that the Son is born but simply that he 'is' in the beginning. Rousseau, "La doctrine de saint Irénée sur la preexistence du fils de Dieu dans Dém. 43," *Le Muséon* 89 (1971): 5–42. (Both Robinson's and Behr's translations reflect the original use of ὑπάρχω here.) Moreover, in the crucial phrase "a Son in the beginning God established then heaven and earth," there is no punctuation in the Armenian leaving no textual motivation to take 'Son' as the object of the verb 'established.' Indeed, the text just as easily can be rendered with 'heaven and earth' as the objects of 'established.' The resulting translation from this punctuation would affirm nothing more than that the Son was with the Father in the beginning when he established the world, a thought quite consonant with the content from *Haer.* as I have shown. (The latter translation is, again, reflected in the translations of Robinson, Rousseau, and Behr.) Since the text is unclear and could rightly be translated either way, the decisive factor ought to be consistency with *Haer.*, which supports an eternal existence of the Logos/Son. In any case, given these factors, *Epid.* 43 is a questionable passage upon which to base an entire thesis, as Orbe and others attempt.

then there is no compelling reason for rejecting the conclusion that Irenaeus understood the nature of the Logos as eternal.¹⁹⁰

A second insight that Irenaeus' anti-Valentinian polemic provides to Irenaeus' understanding of the Logos' generation and, in turn, the Logos' nature, is his conviction that the generation does not imply a spatial separation, either ontological or epistemological, between God and his Logos, unlike the respective understandings of the Valentinians and the Apologists. Rather, because God is simple, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, is himself wholly Logos, the generation of the Logos is by no means a partition of that Logos. The Logos that is the Second Person remains *in* the First Person eternally because the First Person is himself Logos in his nature. Irenaeus' consistent rejection of spatial language in regards to God, as well as his emphasis on the scriptural truth that God is spirit, supports this position. Indeed, Irenaeus notes that the spatial separation between the Aeons of Valentinian theology results in a forfeiture of the property of spirit. According to the Valentinian theory, Irenaeus writes, the Aeons "will be understood to exist separately and divided from the other, like human beings, not mixed or united with one another; but each one, distinct in form and determined in space, will be patterned according to a particular size. Such things are characteristic of a body, not of a spirit. They should, then, no longer speak of the Fullness as spiritual. . . ."¹⁹¹ Barnes' analysis is helpful here, "Whatever is said about God cannot run contrary to the reality or nature of Spirit. In particular, if we think about the generation of the Word we cannot think of a transition in the life of the Word from 'in' God to 'out' of God, since these are spatial notions which cannot be applied to Spirit."¹⁹² Just as there is no transition of time in the divine nature as a result of the generation (as in two-stage Logos theology), so also there is no transition of space.

190 The affirmation of the eternity of the Logos/Son in connection with his generation from the Father suggests that Irenaeus understood it to be an eternal generation in the manner explicitly formulated by Origen and which, subsequently, would become the basis for the early pro-Nicene arguments. Indeed, some past scholars have claimed as much, notably, Aebly, *Missions Divines*, 57–58, Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:581, and Wolfson, *Philosophy*, 1:200. Nevertheless, while the logic would suggest such a conclusion, Irenaeus never makes eternal generation explicit as do later writers. Nor does he make an explicit case of the Second Person's eternal nature from his use of filial language (if there is a Father, then there must be a Son). Instead, in accordance with scripture, he simply affirms both that the Logos/Son is generated from God/Father and that the Logos/Son is eternally present with God/Father. Fantino's conclusion is wisely guarded. He writes, "[the Logos'] origin is atemporal." Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 343.

191 *Haer.* 2.17.3, ACW 65:56.

192 Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 83.

Positively, this conception results in Irenaeus always speaking of God/Father and Logos/Son as closely united—not only is the Son eternally *with* the Father, but also he is eternally *in* the Father:

[T]he God who made the earth and commanded it to bear fruit, and who established the waters and produced the springs, this same [God] bestows upon the human race the blessing of food and the favor of drink through His Son in these last times—the incomprehensible through the comprehensible, and the invisible through the visible, since He does not exist outside of the Father, *but in His bosom*. He says, “No one has ever seen God, except the Only-begotten Son of God who is in the bosom of the Father, He declared [Him].” For since the Father is invisible, the Son who is in His bosom declares Him to all.¹⁹³

In this passage, Irenaeus quotes John 1:18 and the meaning he extracts from it is consonant with the meaning in the Johannine context—both use “the Father’s bosom” language to assert the deep connection that exists between God and Logos, Father and Son.¹⁹⁴ Irenaeus’ language here is also reminiscent of Theophilus’ description of the unity of God and his Logos with one major exception. Theophilus used this language to describe only the first stage of existence of the Logos;¹⁹⁵ Irenaeus used this language to describe the Logos in his incarnate state. For Theophilus, the Logos comes out of the interior of the Father when he is generated, and this action allows the Logos to be present on earth. For Irenaeus, there is no transfer of location—the Logos/Son is in the Father from eternity, even when he is on earth. This is possible because there is no change of stages in the Logos’ existence and the Father is the Fullness who contains *all things*. The Logos is generated from eternity and remains in the Father in his distinct existence from eternity.

Elsewhere, Irenaeus describes the close relationship as the Father’s dwelling in the Son when he writes, “Therefore, he who is was manifested as God by the Son who is in the Father and has the Father in himself, with the Father giving testimony to the Son and the Son announcing the Father.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, Irenaeus considers the relationship of Father and Son not only as the Son dwelling in the Father but as a mutual indwelling or interpenetration of Father and Son.

193 *Haer.* 3.11.5–6, ACW 64:55, italics added.

194 The Latin translator renders the key word here as *sinus*. Greek Fragment 10, retained in Theodoret’s *Eranistes*, reproduces the Johannine λόπος. Rousseau, *SC* 211:128.

195 *Autol.* 2.10, 22.

196 *Haer.* 3.6.2.

Lebreton calls this mutual indwelling the “*immanence réciproque*” of the Father and the Son.¹⁹⁷ As I suggested in the previous chapter, this reciprocal immanence of Father and Son is the Trinitarian reality in the essence of God that Irenaeus suggests, or at least leaves open, with his use of ‘Father’ as a divine title¹⁹⁸ and, moreover, the unique relationship witnessed in the titles provides the basis for the Son’s full knowledge of the Father and subsequent revelation of the Father to the world.¹⁹⁹

This formulation contrasts directly with the topological theology of the Valentinians, whose spatial conception of the divine nature resulted in a distance that denied the Aeons full knowledge of their Father. Conversely, for Irenaeus, since the Logos/Son is one with the Father and one in the sense of no separation, he has full and complete knowledge of the Father. In the same way, as I alluded to above but now make clear with the logic of Logos theology, it is *because* the Logos/Son exists in a mutually interpenetrating/indwelling relationship with God/Father that people can see the Father when they look upon the Son. In this way, the knowledge and the vision of the Son is the same as the knowledge and the vision of the Father.²⁰⁰ Quoting John 14:9–10, Irenaeus writes, “And, moreover, the Lord replied to Philip, who wanted to

197 Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:555. Barnes follows him in the use of this phrase. Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” 78ff. Prestige provides a good summation of the relationship envisioned in this reciprocal immanence or, what he calls, “mutual penetration.” Prestige, *Patristic Thought*, 33–34. Again, however, he relates this description to the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and fails to identify its presence in Irenaeus.

198 See above pp. 73–75. I use ‘Trinitarian’ here proleptically. Technically this is a ‘binitarian’ reality at this point, since Irenaeus only refers here to the reciprocal immanence of two entities. Nevertheless, as I will show in the following two chapters, Irenaeus will later include the Spirit in this indwelling relationship.

199 See above pp. 123–25.

200 Although beyond the boundaries of this chapter, this truth further demonstrates that the ability of the Logos to become incarnate is not a virtue of a lesser divinity. In the ‘seeing’ of the Logos on earth, Irenaeus is always at pains to affirm that both God and the Logos are seen and that both of them remain invisible. Accordingly, he writes, “And through the Logos himself, who had been made visible and palpable, the Father was revealed; although not all believed in him equally, but all saw the Father in the Son: for the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son the visible of the Father.” *Haer.* 4.6.6. Nonetheless, the divine transcendence is maintained, because by nature, God and his Logos remain invisible, but because of his love, God allows himself to be seen, and he is seen in his Logos/Son. The incarnation is a limiting of this transcendence out of love, *but the limiting happens to both God/Father and Logos/Son insofar as both are seen*. Irenaeus writes, “For humans do not see God by themselves; but when [God] wants, he is seen by humans, who he wills, when he wills, and as he wills . . .” *Haer.* 4.20.5.

see the Father, 'I have been with you so long, and you have not known me, Philip? He that sees me, sees also the Father. How do you say to me, 'Show us the Father?' For I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.'"²⁰¹ Elsewhere, he writes, "And because of this the Son reveals the knowledge of the Father by his manifestation. For the manifestation of the Son is the knowledge of the Father; for all things are manifested through the Logos."²⁰² Far from necessitating a diminished divinity of the Second Person, this logic asserts that the Logos/Son can only reveal God/Father because he is the *same*.²⁰³

The implication, then, is that, as mutually indwelling beings, God/Father and Logos/Son consist of the same nature. Irenaeus' understanding of generation again points toward this conclusion, particularly in his use of the light from light analogy. He writes, "For a torch that is lighted later will not have a different light from that which existed earlier."²⁰⁴ For Irenaeus, the emitted being will be of the same kind as the source. Although, as I noted above, Irenaeus does not use this analogy to approximate his own understanding of generation, its meaning is certainly in line with his understanding of the mutually interpenetrating relationship of the Father and Son. Indeed, so united are God/Father and Logos/Son in Irenaeus' thought that he has in the past been interpreted as a "functional modalist."²⁰⁵ Such an interpretation would imply that the Logos/Son is not a distinct entity from the Father, but is merely the presence of the Father or the mode of God's existence on earth. The interpretation of Irenaeus as a modalist ultimately is misguided, however, given the eternal presence of the Son with and in the Father. The Second Person not only begins to work when he appears on earth, as a modalist theology would claim, but, as I sufficiently covered in the previous section, he has been working from the beginning both in creating and in revealing. The modalist interpretation of Irenaeus does reveal an unresolved difficulty in Irenaeus' thought, namely,

²⁰¹ *Haer.* 3.13.2.

²⁰² *Haer.* 4.6.3.

²⁰³ The reciprocal immanence of Father and Son results in the dual revelatory role of Father and Son. In the same context as his quotation of John 14:9–10, Irenaeus continues, "Therefore, to those who the Lord spoke this testimony that in himself they have known and have seen the Father...[H]ow could Peter have been ignorant, to whom the Lord gave testimony that flesh and blood had not revealed to him, but the Father, who is in heaven... the Son indeed leading them to the Father, but the Father revealing to them the Son." *Haer.* 3.13.2. Nevertheless, Irenaeus is much more focused on the Son's revelatory function.

²⁰⁴ *Haer.* 2.17.4, ACW 65:56.

²⁰⁵ Notably, Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 437.

Irenaeus has not developed a category by which to speak of two ‘somethings’ which are together one Logos and one spiritual divine essence (or as I noted previously, Irenaeus has no category of ‘person’).²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the absence of this category in Irenaeus’ thought does not render him a modalist. For Irenaeus, the distinction of God/Father and Logos/Son (and Sophia/Spirit as we will see in later chapters) is evident. What needs defining, according to his polemic, is the nature of their relationship. For his purposes, he needs only to focus on their unity or oneness.²⁰⁷

These two insights regarding Irenaeus’ notion of the generation of the Logos confirm the implications of his understanding of the nature of the Logos/Son drawn from his discussion of his pre-incarnational work: for Irenaeus, God/Father and Logos/Son are equal and one, not in the sense that they are indistinguishable, but in the sense that they share the same divinity; together they constitute one divine nature. This statement does not mean that Irenaeus understood the Father and the Son to be *ὁμοούσιος* in the fourth century sense of the term, but in a more primitive construction, he believed that because the Son was generated from the Father, he was of the same sort or kind as the Father.²⁰⁸ As he writes in his most mature theological vision, “[T]he Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since

206 Barnes notes that the lack of this aspect in Irenaeus’ thought marks Irenaeus’ theology as pre-Monarchian. Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” 81n56.

207 I will suggest in chapter five that the ‘threeness’ in his theology can be understood according to the distinct, economic functions of Father, Son, and Spirit. Nevertheless, the logic of their distinct functions demands a prior, eternal distinction of entities within their essential unity or reciprocal immanence.

208 Orbe’s insistence that Irenaeus did not use *ὁμοούσιος* or think that the Son was *ὁμοούσιος* with the Father obscures the issue. It is anachronistic to assume that he would have thought in these terms and so the state of his Trinitarian theology must not be judged on the lack of the term itself. This anachronism is manifested by Orbe’s method of arguing against the possibility that Irenaeus used this word or thought in this manner on the basis of the fourth century Eusebian claim that uses of *ὁμοούσιος* prior to the fourth century had been connected to material and, therefore, were indicative of ‘Gnostic’ understandings of the generation. Orbe, *Procesión del Verbo*, 660–63. This manner of argumentation, although working in the opposite direction, mirrors that of the works of the second trajectory discussed in the introduction. If we are to place Irenaeus within a theological trajectory leading to the fourth century, which itself should be secondary to understanding Irenaeus in his own context, the question should not be whether Irenaeus would have accepted or rejected the fourth century use of *ὁμοούσιος* in the second century, but rather, whether his understanding of the eternal relationship between the Father and Son approximated the meaning to which the fourth century figures put *ὁμοούσιος*, a term which itself evolved and was never as uniform as often is assumed. I suggest that Irenaeus’

He who is born of God is God . . ."²⁰⁹ While his inference of equality is based on the generation in this passage, his use of Logos theology in general supports such a claim. Both the Father and the Son are, in their very nature, Logos. As Logos, the Second Person is also spirit like God.²¹⁰ As Logos, the Second Person is on the side of God in the Creator/creature divide.²¹¹ The mutual interpenetration of the two divine, spiritual beings allows Irenaeus to maintain belief in one, simple divine nature despite the presence of distinct personal beings within that same nature.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the respective understandings of the Apologists and Irenaeus regarding the nature of the Logos/Son by means of his pre-incarnational work and his generation from God/Father. I found them united in their understanding of the Logos as the agent of creation and revealer of the Father, thereby making the Logos both divine and distinct from God/Father. Nevertheless, a key difference emerged in their respective motivations for attributing the mediatory work of creating and revealing to the Logos. For the Apologists, the understanding of mediation is dictated by Middle Platonic belief of the inability of the transcendent God/Father to be present and active in the material world. This understanding resulted in a Logos whose ability to work in the world is predicated upon a diminished divine nature. Conversely, Irenaeus embraced a scriptural argument regarding the mediation of the Logos; God creates through the Logos because John testifies to it. Due to an absence of Middle Platonic terminology, Irenaeus is not beholden to a logic that necessitates the diminished divinity of the mediator. As a result, he makes the equality of the First and Second Persons the basis of his discussion of the pre-incarnational revelatory work of the Logos. The Logos is equal with God; therefore, the Logos can manifest him to the world.

These figures' variant understandings of the generation of the Logos confirm these conclusions regarding the nature of the Logos. The Apologists

formulation of the reciprocal immanence of Father and Son, as well as the spiritual nature of both, approaches the logic of the fourth century.

209 *Epid.* 47, Behr, 71, italics added. Barnes states that this is one of Irenaeus' strongest statements for the full divinity of the Second Person. Barnes, "Irenaeus' Trinitarian Theology," 87.

210 *Haer.* 3.10.2, *Epid.* 71.

211 *Haer.* 3.8.3, 4.11.2.

understood the generation of the Logos in terms of two-stage Logos theology, meaning that the Logos is not an eternally distinguished and personal entity. He is eternal, but only inasmuch as he is an impersonal power of God. At his generation, he comes out of the Father and from that point on is the personal Logos who works in creation. This distinction is based primarily on the Stoic distinction of λόγος ἐνδιάθετος / λόγος προφορικός. As a result, the generation of the Logos resembles the utterance of a human word, predicated on the will or intention of the Father and connected to his role as agent of creation. In other words, for the Apologists, the existence of the Logos was not necessary. Conversely, Irenaeus attempts again to be purely scriptural, and because he deems scripture silent on the speculative question, he urges silence on the matter. Nonetheless, his detailed polemic against the Valentinian theory of emanation provides insights into his understanding. Namely, the Logos/Son eternally coexists with the Father. Thus, the Logos' generation from the Father does not signify a beginning point to the Logos' existence. Moreover, the Logos exists eternally in God in a mutually indwelling relationship. Thus, the Logos' generation does not result in any spatial or epistemological distance between the two entities.

These differences ultimately suggest that a variant understanding of the nature of the Logos/Son is at work in the respective theologies of the Apologists and Irenaeus. For the Apologists, the Logos/Son is divine but not of an equal divinity with the Father. His diminished divinity results from his generation from the Father's will, precludes his eternally separate existence, and justifies his ability to be visible and active in the material world. For Irenaeus, the Logos/Son is also divine, but he is of an equal divinity with the Father. His equal divinity is demonstrated through his eternal coexistence with the Father, his eternal presence in the bosom of the Father (or their reciprocal immanence) shown in that he like the Father is Logos and in his unique ability to reveal the Father. The only difference between the two divine entities appears to be the respective roles they play within the economy; above all, the Father begets while the Son is begotten. These distinctions will provide the focus of the final chapter. Before I can assess the economic manifestation of the Trinity, I must focus on these figures' respective understandings of the Holy Spirit proper.

The Sophia of God

In the fourth chapter, I turn to the Apologists' and Irenaeus' respective understandings of the nature of the Third Person, called 'Spirit' (Πνεῦμα) and 'Wisdom' (Σοφία). As with the third chapter's study of the Second Person, space here precludes an exhaustive treatment of these pneumatologies. Therefore, I will address only those characteristics that serve to establish the state of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology.¹ These characteristics are (1) the degree to which the Holy Spirit is a distinct, divine entity alongside the Logos/Son and the logic by which this truth is established, and (2) the functions the Holy Spirit performs in his capacity as a divine entity.² I will argue that when compared to the undeveloped and inconsistent pneumatologies of the Apologists, Irenaeus shows an advanced understanding of the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit and his divine functions. Moreover, Irenaeus supplies the logic, absent in the Apologists' pneumatologies, whereby the Holy Spirit is equal to the Logos in his position relative to God.

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- 1 I will not address aspects by which the Holy Spirit affects anthropology or soteriology. While important to Irenaeus' pneumatology, they have little bearing on the state of his Trinitarian theology. In any case other works have addressed these aspects adequately. A.D. Alès, for example, focuses solely on those facets of Irenaeus' pneumatology that touch anthropology. Alès, "La doctrine de l'Esprit en saint Irénée," *RSR* 14 (1924): 497–538. Other more recent works regarding various aspects of Irenaeus' pneumatology include Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86–127, Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 76–94, 226–76, and H.J. Jaschke, *Der Heilige Geist im Bekenntnis der Kirche: Eine Studie zur Pneumatologie des Irenäus von Lyon im Ausgang vom altchristlichen Glaubensbekenntnis*. Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 40 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976). Briggman, whose work is the most recent and most comprehensive study of Irenaeus' pneumatology, will serve as my primary dialogue partner in the present chapter.
 - 2 As with the chapter on the Logos, here I will limit my discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit to the time prior to the incarnation of the Son. Although the form of the Holy Spirit does not change at the incarnation, as it does with the Son, Irenaeus believes the Holy Spirit is given to the church in a new way at Pentecost. See below pp. 184–85.

The Apologists³

Justin

As the earliest of the Apologists, Justin shows the most ambiguity and inconsistencies regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Without question, Justin affirms the existence of a Holy Spirit (Πνεῦμα),⁴ a third divine entity who is distinct from and exists alongside the Father and the Son and who together with them is an object of Christian worship. For example, in a summary of Christian teaching given early in 1 *Apol.*, Justin writes, “[W]e worship the Maker of this Universe . . . Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ . . . and we will show that we worship Him rationally, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in second place and the prophetic Spirit in the third rank.”⁵ Elsewhere, he writes, “Plato, reading these things and not accurately understanding . . . said that the power next to the first God was placed *Chi-wise* in the universe. And as to his speaking of a third, since he read, as we said before, that which was spoken by Moses, ‘the Spirit of God moved over the waters.’ For he gives second place to the Logos who is with God, who, he said, was placed *Chi-wise* in the universe, and the third to the Spirit who was said to be borne over the water, saying, ‘And the third around the third.’”⁶ Significant also in this regard are numerous liturgical passages in which the Spirit appears alongside the Father and Son. In a discussion on baptism, for example, Justin describes new believers as washed “in the name of God the

3 Unlike the topics studied in previous chapters, a development in pneumatology occurs within the three Apologists. Therefore, I will not consider them together according to similar themes in their respective pneumatologies. Instead, I will consider the person and work of the Holy Spirit according to each Apologist in turn. Something analogous happened in the Apologists’ development of two-stage Logos theology. The development of two-stage Logos theology crystallized in Theophilus’ thought, but I interpreted that ‘development’ as retroversion. In Irenaeus’ rejection of two-stage Logos theology, he comes closest to Justin. With pneumatology, the opposite occurs. From Justin to Theophilus, the natural progression of pneumatological thought leads right to Irenaeus, who further develops and expands the pneumatology he finds in Theophilus. In his pneumatology, Irenaeus stands closest to Theophilus.

4 Justin speaks variously of the ‘Spirit,’ the ‘holy Spirit,’ the ‘divine Spirit,’ the ‘prophetic Spirit’ or some combination of these titles. For an exhaustive list, see José Pablo Martín, *El Espíritu Santo en los orígenes del cristianismo: Estudio sobre I Clemente, Ignacio, 11 Clemente y Justino Mártir*, Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose (Zürich: Pas-Verlag, 1971), 316–20.

5 1 *Apol.* 13.1, 3, ACW 56:30–31.

6 1 *Apol.* 60.5–7, ACW 56:65 with minor revisions. The Platonic citation comes from the Pseudo-Platonic Second Epistle 312e. See Arthur J. Droge, “Justin Martyr and the Restoration of Philosophy,” *CH* 56 (1987): 303–19.

Father and Master of all,” and “in the name of Jesus Christ” and “in the name of the Holy Spirit.”⁷ Likewise, Justin shares what appears to be an early form of a Eucharistic prayer when he writes, “Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.”⁸ These passages demonstrate that Justin’s Christian experience testifies to the active presence of a Holy Spirit distinct from the Father who creates and the Son who appeared on earth.⁹

The inconsistency arises, however, when Justin turns to detail the work of God in the economy of salvation. In these instances, the Spirit has a significantly diminished role, one that does not match the high place accorded him in Christian statements of belief and liturgical prayers. While for Justin, the Son is the agent of creation, the object of the theophanies to Jacob, Moses, and others, the intermediary between God and humans, the divine being who affected salvation through his death on the cross, the Spirit plays no role in these divine actions.¹⁰ Indeed, the only function the Spirit performs is prophecy.¹¹ Nevertheless, even here, Justin vacillates and at times attributes the role of prophecy to the Logos for, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, it is the Logos who reveals God to humans in the theophanies and in the scriptures, both of which may be properly considered prophetic.

Some scholars, notably H.B. Swete in his still valuable 1912 study on the Holy Spirit in early Christian writings, have suggested that the inconsistency in Justin’s pneumatology lies only in this confusion of function—the attribution of prophecy alternately to the Logos and the Spirit—but that he is consistent in his distinction of the *persons* of the Son and Spirit.¹² This is a plausible analysis,

7 1 *Apol.* 61.10, 13.

8 1 *Apol.* 67.2, ACW 56:71.

9 On Justin’s understanding of the experience of the Spirit in his Christian community, as opposed to the Spirit’s personhood or work in Justin’s theology, see J.E. Morgan-Wynne, “The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience in Justin Martyr,” *VC* 38 (1984): 172–77.

10 Surprisingly, even though Justin cites Gen. 1:2, he does not use the passage to refer to a creative work of the Holy Spirit. The presence of a hovering spirit in Gen. 1:2 tells Justin only that Plato must have read Moses in order to form his understanding of three powers. See 1 *Apol.* 60.5–7 quoted previously.

11 Texts in which the Spirit is named as ‘prophetic’ or as the agent of prophecy include 1 *Apol.* 6, 12, 13, 31, 33, 35, 38–42, 47–48, 51, 53, 59, 60, 63; *Dial.* 25, 28, 32, 34, 38, 43, 49, 52, 56, 61, 73–74, 78, 91, 114, 124.

12 Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers*, repr. (London: MacMillan, 1912), 38–39. See also the similar positions by Semisch, *Justin Martyr*, 207–35, Goodenough, *Justin Martyr*, 181 (Goodenough limits the distinctiveness of the Spirit to the *Apologies*), Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:476–77, and Kelly, *Early*

but the problem for pneumatology ultimately runs deeper. José Pablo Martín is closer when he notes that Justin displays “a profound tendency to concentrate in the λόγος every manifestation of the Father.”¹³ Similarly, Barnard observes, “In strict logic there is no place in Justin’s thought for the person of the Holy Spirit because the logos carries out his functions.”¹⁴ In the same trajectory, Anthony Briggman has recently argued that the inconsistency stems from an unresolved tension between Justin’s Trinitarian conviction and his binitarian logic.¹⁵ In other words, while Justin’s Christian experience convinces him of the existence of a Holy Spirit distinguishable in identity from the Father and the Son, he has failed to develop a logic that necessitates the Spirit’s separate existence. For the Son can do, and in fact does, everything that the Spirit might do.

If this is the case, then the danger is not a mere confusion of function, but the lack of a need for the presence of a Spirit altogether for if the existence of the Spirit is not necessary, then other theological exigencies will sooner or later eclipse the Spirit. Indeed, such an eclipse characterizes Justin’s theology. Justin’s need to prove the divinity of the Logos to answer the question of how the transcendent God can manifest himself in a material world leads him to attribute every divine work to the Logos. Thus, even prophecy, which Justin specifically notes is a divine work,¹⁶ finally becomes the work of the Logos alone. In one place, he even insists that “the prophets are inspired by *no one other than* the divine Logos . . .”¹⁷ Similarly, the Logos even becomes the agent of his own mysterious conception, despite the Gospel of Luke’s specification of the Holy Spirit as the agent.¹⁸ Justin comments on the Lukan annunciation text that “[i]t is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the Power of God as anything else than the Logos . . . and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive not by intercourse, but by power.”¹⁹ The disappearance of the Spirit in Justin’s thought is further

Christian Doctrines, 101–4. A minority position holds that Justin does not perceive a clear distinction between the persons of the Logos and the Holy Spirit. Notable scholars of this opinion include Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 102–6, Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 32–36, 44 and most recently Bucur, “Angelic Spirit,” 190–208.

13 Martín, *Espiritu Santo*, 184.

14 Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 106.

15 Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 9–31.

16 1 *Apol.* 12.10.

17 “Ὅτι δὲ οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ θεοφοροῦνται οἱ προφητεύοντες εἰ μὴ Λόγῳ θεῷ . . .” 1 *Apol.* 33.9, italics added.

18 “The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you . . .’” Luke 1:35, NRSV translation.

19 1 *Apol.* 33.6, ACW 56:46 with minor revisions.

supported by his lack of any consideration of the Spirit's origin, an omission that is surprising when compared with the many times he speculates on the Logos' generation from the Father. Moreover, despite the Spirit's presence in his liturgical statements, Justin fails to address to any significant degree an ongoing role of the Spirit in the Christian community.

Ultimately, Justin's pneumatology suffers because of an ill-defined place for the Spirit in the economy. His Christian experience and participation in the Christian liturgy informs him of the existence of a Holy Spirit, but his primary intent to establish the Logos/Son as a divine being alongside the Most High God precludes any perception on his part of a unique work of the Spirit that would have better defined the Holy Spirit and established him as a distinct entity alongside the Logos/Son. Any work that could prove divinity to an entity other than the Most High God is ascribed to the Logos; therefore, the Spirit remains for Justin an undefined afterthought.

Athenagoras

Like Justin, Athenagoras reveals a strong conviction in the existence of a distinct and personal entity called the Spirit. Also like Justin, this conviction comes through most clearly in the context of describing the content of Christian belief. Nevertheless, Athenagoras' pneumatology shows two important developments that allow him to establish the Spirit's distinct personality to a degree not present in Justin's work. First, he identifies a divine function in the economy that is unique to the Spirit, one that only he can perform, namely, prophecy. Second, he addresses the origin of the Spirit from the Father. I will explore these pneumatological developments in turn.

With the exception of traditional statements of Christian belief, every passage in which the Spirit appears in *Leg.* specifically links him to this prophetic function. Several examples are worth noting. Athenagoras writes, "[I]t would be irrational to abandon belief in the Spirit from God [τῷ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματι] which had moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments and to pay attention to human opinions."²⁰ Elsewhere, he writes, "I expect that you who are so eager for knowledge and so learned are not without understanding of the teachings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest of the prophets who in the ecstasy of their thoughts, as the divine Spirit [τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος] moved them, uttered what they had been inspired to say, the Spirit making use of them as a flautist might blow into a flute . . ."²¹ Both of these passages underscore the Spirit's work of prophecy as a divine work contrasted to

²⁰ *Leg.* 7.3, Schoedel, 17.

²¹ *Leg.* 9.1, Schoedel, 21.

mere human wisdom. The Spirit uses the prophets as an instrument; the words are his and, therefore, God's. To that end, Athenagoras is careful to note in another place that the Greek poets and philosophers, the possessors of human wisdom, are specifically not inspired by the Holy Spirit (Πνεῦμα) but have a mere affinity with the breath (πνοή) of God.²²

The consistent connection of the function of prophecy with the Spirit serves to bring the Spirit into a parallel status with the Father and Son by establishing him as necessary to the divine work of the economy. This parallel status comes to the forefront in a passage in *Leg.* 10 where Athenagoras describes the three divine objects of Christian belief. In so doing, he connects one function—or one category of functions²³—with each of the three divine entities which serves both to distinguish them and to unite them. He writes that God the Father “created, adorned, and now rules the universe . . .” He creates through the Logos, the “Ideal Form and Energizing Power for everything material . . .” Subsequently, the Holy Spirit “is active in those who speak prophetically . . .”²⁴ Through the one to one correlation of these functions with the divine entities of Father, Son, and Spirit, Athenagoras makes it clear that the Spirit's existence is necessary to the work of the economy in the same way that the Son's is. Without him, there would be no prophecy. Moreover, the separate functions serve to keep the divine entities distinct from one another—only the Father rules, only the Son is the agent of creation, and only the Spirit is the agent of prophecy. Nevertheless, these distinct functions also serve to unite the three precisely because the functions share a status as the power of God. Athenagoras writes, “We say that there is God and the Son, his Word, and the Holy Spirit, united according to power yet distinguished according to rank as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit . . .”²⁵

Some scholars have suggested that Athenagoras believes the Spirit to be active in the economy, not only through his prophetic function, but also in the creative process. This interpretation comes from a statement in *Leg.* 6.2, where Athenagoras writes, “all things have been created by his [that is, God's]

22 *Leg.* 7.2. This conception is quite different from Justin's formula of the ‘Spermatikos Logos’ which held that the same Logos inspired both the prophets and the philosophers, the only difference being one of degree.

23 Athenagoras' description of God the Father creating, adorning, and ruling in *Leg.* 10.1 could be taken as three functions, but they all refer to the same general category of providential creating.

24 *Leg.* 10.1, 3, and 4.

25 *Leg.* 24.2. Schoedel, 59 with minor revisions. I will return to this passage and Athenagoras' understanding of the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit in greater detail in chapter five. See below pp. 197–99.

Logos and sustained by the spirit from him . . .”²⁶ Several problems exist with this interpretation. First, in *Leg* 10, where Athenagoras addresses each divine entity in turn and distinguishes one from another through specific functions, he says nothing about a creative or sustaining function of the Spirit, instead limiting the Spirit’s work to prophecy. If the Spirit’s functions included sustaining, this important work likely would be repeated in *Leg* 10.4, the only passage that addresses the distinct identity of the Spirit as compared with the other two entities. Second, *Leg* 6.2 is the only passage in the entire work that notes a creative function of the Spirit, despite several other passages where Athenagoras describes the process of creation.²⁷ The other creation passages

26 “...ὅφ’ οὗ λόγῳ δεδημιούργηται καὶ τῷ παρ’ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι συνέχεται τὰ πάντα...” *Leg* 6.2. Scholars who show this understanding of the Spirit’s work in Athenagoras include Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 107, Barnes, “Early Christian Pneumatology,” 173, Crehan, *Athenagoras*, 36, Malherbe, “The Holy Spirit in Athenagoras,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 538–42, Prestige, *Patristic Thought*, 88–89, and Schoedel, *Athenagoras*, xviii, 15. Unfortunately, the most prolific Athenagoran scholar, Pouderon, is unclear on his interpretation of the potential creative function of the Spirit. Although his translation of *Leg* 6.2 favors the position that πνεῦμα refers to the Holy Spirit, Pouderon fails to address the passage in his larger treatment of Athenagoras’ pneumatology (*Philosophe Chrétien*, 140–42) wherein he notes that Athenagoras is capable of using πνεῦμα not to refer to the Holy Spirit but to refer to a general attribute of God, which, as I will show presently, would appear to favor my reading. However, his chart categorizing Athenagoras’ uses of πνεῦμα according to his schematization inexplicably omits the use of πνεῦμα in *Leg* 6.2. Given Pouderon’s limiting of the work of the Spirit to prophecy and his general ambivalence toward Athenagoras’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit regarding his distinct personhood, the scholar likely does not ascribe a creative function to the Spirit in Athenagoras’ thought. Unfortunately, his failure to address the key passage makes it impossible to be certain of his thoughts.

27 For example, *Leg* 4.2, 10.1, 3, 25.3. Conversely, Malherbe argues that the Prov. 8:22 quotation in *Leg* 10.4 should be taken not as a reference to the Logos, as is normally understood, but as a reference to the Spirit, thus providing an additional text to support the Spirit’s creative work (for the Greek of *Leg* 10.4, see below p. 157n29). His argument is as follows: 1) the use of ἀπόρροια to describe the Spirit in *Leg* 10.4 is inspired by Wisd. 7:25; 2) the figure of Prov. 8:22 and Wisd. 7:25 both refer to a pre-existent Sophia/Wisdom figure; 3) for Athenagoras to refer the Sophia of Prov. 8:22 to the Logos and the Sophia of Wisd. 7:25 to the Spirit is contradictory. Accordingly, Malherbe takes the dative form of λόγος in *Leg* 10.4 to refer to the Second Person, as opposed to ‘account,’ and the verb συναῖδω (‘to agree’) to refer to the agreement of the Logos and the Spirit in their respective creative works. Malherbe, “Holy Spirit,” 538–40. Malherbe’s argument has several difficulties. First, Athenagoras nowhere else refers to the Spirit as ‘Sophia,’ but he specifically refers to the Logos as ‘Sophia’ (*Leg* 24.2) where the title juxtaposes with that of the Spirit who is not the Sophia but the ἀπόρροια of God. Thus, if Athenagoras is appropriating the Jewish Wisdom tradition in order to establish a pre-existent figure in creation, the figure with

each contain a version of the statement ‘God creates through his Logos,’ but they lack any mention of a creative function of the Spirit. Third, the context of the *Leg.* 6.2 statement suggests that Athenagoras does not even intend to explain the Christian understanding of creation, which he does not address in full until *Leg.* 10. Rather, Athenagoras only intends in this passage to give occasional examples of the parallels between Christian and Greek beliefs regarding the divine. Accordingly, in addition to Plato’s *Tim.*, from which comes the passage Athenagoras alludes to in *Leg.* 6.2, he continues to refer to Aristotle’s unmoved mover in *Leg.* 6.3 and the Stoics all-pervasive πνεῦμα which moves through all “permutations of matter” in *Leg.* 6.4.

Given these considerations, it is more likely that Athenagoras’ reference to “the spirit from God” as the sustainer of creation in *Leg.* 6.2 does not refer to the specific Holy Spirit who after the Father and Son is the third object of Christian belief and worship. Rather, πνεῦμα refers to a generic spirit of God that permeates and sustains creation, a point that correlates, in accordance with the context of *Leg.* 6, to the Stoic belief in an all-pervasive πνεῦμα.²⁸ Thus, the Holy Spirit that is an object of worship alongside the Father and Son has no function in creation; his work is strictly prophetic.

Having developed a function unique to the Holy Spirit that necessitates his existence alongside the Father and the Son, Athenagoras, perhaps as a result of this conviction, addresses the origin or generation of the Spirit, which is his second pneumatological development from Justin. The key passage occurs

which he is concerned is more likely the Logos. However, even if Athenagoras associates the title ‘Sophia’ with the Spirit (by, for example, attributing the figure in *Wisd.* 7:25 to the pre-existent Spirit), this does not necessitate him attributing the figure in *Prov.* 8:22 to the Spirit as well. In neither Athenagoras’ quotation of *Prov.* 8:22, nor his allusion to *Wisd.* 7:25, does he refer to the pre-existent figure called Sophia by name—Malherbe has provided the name. Second, Malherbe overlooks the adjective προφητικός used to describe the Spirit in *Leg.* 10.4. Its presence signals not a creative function of the Spirit but a prophetic function—the Spirit prophesies to the presence of the Logos with God and his actions in creation in *Prov.* 8:22. In the next line, Athenagoras underscores this prophetic function only as characteristic of the Spirit. Moreover, the only other use of the adjective in connection with the Spirit (*Leg.* 18.2) likewise underscores his function of speaking through the scriptures. This prophetic action of the Spirit explains both the verb συνᾶδω and the change of the referent of λόγος from the Second Person in *Leg.* 10.2–3 to ‘account’ in *Leg.* 10.4. The prophetic Spirit ‘agrees’ with Athenagoras’ ‘account’ of the generation of the Logos insofar as he prophesied of the same generation in *Prov.* 8:22.

28 In this respect, it is of note that the Greek word λόγος in *Leg.* 6.2 lacks a definite article, a grammatical point that suggests Athenagoras is not referring here to the specific person of the Logos either, but is instead referring to God’s speaking out creation as Genesis testifies. If this is the case, then his use of both λόγος and πνεῦμα in this passage is incidental and *Leg.* 6.2 should not be taken as a passage describing the functions of either.

in *Leg.* 10.4, the passage following his detailed statement on the generation of the Logos. Athenagoras writes, “Furthermore, we claim this same Holy Spirit, who works in those who cry out prophetically, to be an effluence of God, who flows forth and returns like a ray of the sun.”²⁹ Several similarities between this passage and his passage describing the generation of the Logos suggest that Athenagoras intentionally parallels the two accounts.³⁰ First, the Spirit, like the Logos, has his source in God. Second, the Spirit, like the Logos, comes forth to perform a function, namely prophecy, described with a cognate word with that used to describe the function of the Logos (ἐνεργέω compared to ἐνέργεια). Third, Athenagoras uses scripture to support the account of the Spirit’s origin, as he did with the generation of the Logos. The passage on the Spirit’s generation in *Leg.* 10.4 contains an allusion to Wisdom of Solomon 7:25, which reads, “For she [Wisdom] is a breath [ἀτμός] of the power of God, and a pure emanation [ἀπόρροια] of the glory of the Almighty . . .”³¹ The key word here is ἀπόρροια. Athenagoras uses the word both because of its scriptural pedigree and because it distinguishes the Spirit’s origin from the Son’s origin. Only the Son is said to be the first begotten and only the Son is said to be generated (from the Greek γίνομαι); by contrast, the Spirit is an ἀπόρροια of the Father. Elsewhere, the word functions almost as a title for the Third Person. He writes, “the Son [is] the Mind, Logos, and Sophia of the Father, and the Spirit [is] the Effluence [ἀπόρροια] [of the Father] as light from a fire.”³² Here, ἀπόρροια stands in parallel position to the titles of the Son. Athenagoras is once again consistent with his language to keep the Son and Spirit separate, although they both have their source in the Father.

29 “καίτοι καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐνεργοῦν τοῖς ἐκφωνοῦσι προφητικῶς ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἀπόρροϊαν εἶναι φαμεν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπορρέον καὶ ἐπαναφερόμενον ὡς ἀκτῖνα ἡλίου.” *Leg.* 10.4. The Holy Spirit here refers back to the Spirit of the previous statement where Athenagoras writes, “The prophetic Spirit also agrees [συνάδει] with this account [τῷ λόγῳ] [of the generation of the Logos]. ‘For the Lord,’ it says, ‘made me the beginning of his ways for his works.’” *Leg.* 10.4, Schoedel, 23.

30 For a discussion on Athenagoras’ passage on the generation of the Logos, see above pp. 111–12.

31 Wisd. 7:25, NRSV translation. Most scholars making this connection argue that the ἀτμός of Wisd. 7:25 is reflected in Athenagoras’ use of ἀκτίς (ray); the Apologist simply mixed the words. See Malherbe, “Holy Spirit,” 538–39 and Pouderon, sc 379:102–3n3. With his use of Wisd. 7:25 in reference to the Spirit, one might expect Athenagoras to use the title ‘Sophia’ of the Spirit, which would have helped establish both the eternal nature and the distinction of the Spirit, but he does not use this title. This identification is a pneumatological development that will occur after the Athenian Apologist.

32 *Leg.* 24.2.

The meaning of ἀπόρροια, however, is not immediately clear. It is variously translated as ‘emanation’ or ‘effluence,’ indicating both the divine origin of the Spirit (he flowed from the Father) as well as his similarity to God once separated. Moreover, it would appear that ἀπόρροια falls short of establishing an eternal relationship between the Father and the Spirit. The lack of the eternal, distinct nature of the Spirit arguably is confirmed with Athenagoras’ use of the analogy that the Spirit “flows forth [from God] and returns [to God] like a ray of the sun.”³³ Moreover, Athenagoras does not display the same careful concern to establish the eternal nature of the Spirit that he did with the Logos. As such, there is nothing analogous to the two-stage Logos theology in relation to the Spirit in Athenagoras’ work. More akin to the Valentinian theory of emanations, Athenagoras’ pneumatology implies that the Spirit commences his existence when he emanates from the Father and arguably ends his separate existence when he returns to the Father. Still, Athenagoras’ insights on the generation of the Spirit, and its parallels with his account of the generation of the Son, suggest that Athenagoras understood, although imperfectly, the nature of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the Logos.

Despite the Spirit’s distinct role of prophecy, his work is limited. Athenagoras, like Justin, does not address the question of an ongoing role of the Spirit in the present life of the Christian community. His lack of attention to this point stems from his failure to address any aspect of the incarnation or the life of the church. Thus, for all his advances upon Justin’s ill-defined notion of the Spirit, Athenagoras fails to attribute to the Spirit a lasting role in God’s economy.

Theophilus

Theophilus exhibits two important pneumatological advances from his predecessors. Both developments are the result of a Second Temple Jewish influence gained from Theophilus’ strongly Jewish/Jewish Christian setting in Antioch.³⁴ The first of these developments is his identification of the Third Person with the hypostasized Wisdom or Sophia (Σοφία) of God present in Jewish Wisdom literature. This identification denotes a significant change from Justin, Athenagoras, and other early writers who universally identified

33 *Leg.* 10.4.

34 On the Jewish background of the images that follow, as related to Theophilus, see Bardy, *SC* 20:43–45, Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, 110–14, Grant, “Problem of Theophilus,” 188–96, Grant, “Theophilus to Antioch,” 234–42, Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, 28–31, 59–61, and Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:570.

this Sophia figure with the Son.³⁵ The second development is his attribution of the work of creation to the Holy Spirit alongside the Son. According to the second century Jewish Christian understanding of God, this attribution gives to the Spirit a divine function, and as a result, the divinity of the Holy Spirit among the Apologists is clearest in Theophilus' works.

Theophilus makes the identification of the Holy Spirit and Sophia in two places. First, he interprets Psalm 33/2:6 to say that two agents are at work in creation, as opposed to the standard one agent (the Logos) proclaimed by the fourth Gospel and assumed by Justin and Athenagoras. Theophilus understands this second agent, called πνεῦμα by the Psalmist, as the Sophia of God. He writes, "God made all things through his Logos and his Sophia, for 'by his Logos the heavens were made firm and by his Spirit all their power.'"³⁶ In Theophilus' interpretation that introduces the Psalm, Σοφία stands, alongside Λόγος, in the place of the Psalmist's Πνεῦμα. Theophilus' parallel placement of Logos indicates that he does not intend to introduce a fourth agent called Πνεῦμα into the equation. Since the first agent is the same in both Theophilus' statement and the Psalm with which he supports his statement, it follows that the second agent is the same, despite a change in titles. Second, when he refers to the prophetic work of the Third Person, Theophilus at one point interchanges the titles 'Spirit' and 'Sophia.' He writes, "The men of God, who were possessed by the Holy Spirit [Πνεύματος ἁγίου] and became prophets and were inspired and instructed by God himself, were taught by God and became holy and righteous. For this reason they were judged worthy to receive the reward of becoming instruments of God and containing Sophia [Σοφίαν] from him. Through Sophia they spoke about the creation of the world and about everything else . . ."³⁷ In this passage, the Sophia acts as the agent who inspires prophecy, and the same is implied, in accordance with the dominant tradition of the second century, of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the two figures are equated by their identical function.

The identification of the Holy Spirit with Sophia represents a significant development in pneumatology because it provides Theophilus the logic that establishes the Sophia/Spirit as a distinct entity alongside, and equal to, the Logos.

35 Although Athenagoras alludes to Wisd. 7:25 in his discussion of the Spirit, which could have constituted an identification of Spirit and Sophia, he does not develop the idea to any significant degree, and he never makes explicit the connection between Spirit and Sophia. For Athenagoras, following Justin, the Sophia of God is the Logos. See *Leg.* 24.2.

36 "Ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ Λόγου αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς Σοφίας ἐποίησεν τὰ πάντα· τῷ γὰρ Λόγῳ αὐτοῦ ἐστερεώθησαν οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ τῷ Πνεύματι αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν." *Autol.* 1.7

37 *Autol.* 2.9, Grant, 39 with minor revisions.

With Theophilus, the Sophia/Spirit is no longer an ambiguous, vague figure at times subsumed into the person of the Logos (as was witnessed with Justin) or an entity emerging from but eventually returning to the Father (as was witnessed with Athenagoras). Rather, the Spirit's identity as the Sophia of God parallels the Son's identity as the Logos of God. Both entities are eternal attributes of the Father and both stand in equal relationship to the Father (allowing Theophilus elsewhere to refer to them as the "hands of God").³⁸

Given this understanding, it is not surprising that Theophilus, like Athenagoras, reflects on the Sophia/Spirit's generation. Theophilus writes, "Therefore God, having his own Logos innate [ἐνδιάθετος], that is in his own bowels, generated him, along with his own Sophia, vomiting him out before everything else."³⁹ Theophilus' inclusion of the Sophia/Spirit with the Logos in this statement again demonstrates their parallel natures. Moreover, their comparable generations from God's interior suggests that all the aspects of distinct personality given to the Logos based on his generation ought to be given to the Sophia/Spirit as well.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the Sophia/Spirit is eternal, although he exists internal to and indistinguishable from the Father prior to his generation. As with the Logos, the Sophia/Spirit does nothing in this first stage that would necessitate a separate existence. Thus, only at his generation before the creation of the world, does the Sophia/Spirit come forth from the Father and stand as an identifiable entity distinguished from God. From this point on he, like the Logos, is enabled to work as God's agent in the world.

For Theophilus, the Sophia/Spirit performs the same functions as the Logos in the material creation; namely, the Spirit reveals the purposes of the Father and he is an agent of creation. Like Justin and Athenagoras, Theophilus believes that the Spirit functions as the prophets' agent of inspiration. He writes, "All these things are taught us by the Holy Spirit which spoke through Moses and the other prophets..."⁴¹ Elsewhere he writes, "It is obvious how agreeably and harmoniously all the prophets spoke, making their proclamation by one and the same Spirit concerning the sole rule of God and the origin of the world and the making of man."⁴² Again, in the third book, he writes, "[T] he teaching of the prophets and the gospels is consistent with [justice] because

³⁸ *Autol.* 2.18.

³⁹ "Ἐχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας, ἐξερευσάμενος πρὸ τῶν ὄλων." *Autol.* 2.10, italics added.

⁴⁰ For Theophilus' discussion of the Logos' generation, see above pp. 112–15.

⁴¹ *Autol.* 2.30, Grant, 75.

⁴² *Autol.* 2.35, Grant, 87 with minor changes.

all the inspired men made utterances by means of the one Spirit of God.”⁴³ Theophilus, like Justin, also attributes the function of prophecy to the Logos. For example, he writes, “And Moses, who lived many years before Solomon—or rather, the Logos of God speaking through him as an instrument—says . . .”⁴⁴ Moreover, Theophilus interprets the theophanies as revelatory expressions of the Logos.⁴⁵ As with Justin, this tendency could be interpreted as confusion or inconsistency between the functions of the Second and Third Persons. Nevertheless, given Theophilus’ more defined understanding of the Sophia/Spirit as parallel to the Logos, as well as the absence of any loss of the Spirit’s identity, the interchange is possibly intentional, emphasizing both the Logos and the Spirit as prophetic agents to show their cooperation in this manner. Just as both agents cooperate in the work of creation, so both agents speak the prophetic words of God because both were with God in the beginning.

Two observations emerge from Theophilus’ passages regarding the prophetic function of the Spirit. First, the prophetic function is normally associated with the title Πνεῦμα as opposed to Σοφία.⁴⁶ Second, unlike the previous two Apologists, Theophilus does not limit the Spirit’s prophetic/revelatory function to the prophets; instead, he understands this function as ongoing in the Christian community. The Holy Spirit spoke through Christian writers in the same way he spoke through the Septuagint writers,⁴⁷ and he continues to speak to Christians. Theophilus writes, “For this reason it is plain that all the rest were in error and that only the Christians have held the truth—we who are instructed by the Holy Spirit who spoke in the holy prophets and foretold everything.”⁴⁸ These passages are noteworthy insofar as Theophilus says little else about theological matters beyond the Jewish scriptures.

If the title Πνεῦμα is associated most often with the work of prophecy, Σοφία is associated most often with the work of creation. This association likely is due to its Jewish origins as well as the parallel it establishes between the Third Person as God’s eternal Wisdom and the Second Person as God’s eternal Word.

43 *Autol.* 3.12, Grant, 117. Other references to the Spirit’s prophetic function include *Autol.* 1.14, 16, 3.17, 23.

44 *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 41.

45 *Autol.* 2.22.

46 As noted previously, one exception to this trend occurs in *Autol.* 2.9. Theophilus makes this exception possibly in order to solidify the identification between the Spirit and the figure he calls ‘Sophia’.

47 *Autol.* 2.22 notes that John spoke by the same Holy Spirit and *Autol.* 3.12 notes that the teaching of the Gospels are consistent with the teaching of the prophets precisely because the same agent inspired them both.

48 *Autol.* 2.33, Grant, 82.

Therefore, like the Logos, the Sophia is with God in the beginning—God has two agents of creation. Theophilus writes, “For the prophets did not exist when the world came into existence; there were the Sophia of God which is in [God] and his holy Logos who is always present with him.”⁴⁹ Regarding the work of creation itself, Theophilus writes, “God is found saying ‘Let us make man after the image and likeness’ as if he needed assistance; but he said ‘Let us make’ to none other than his own Logos and his own Sophia.”⁵⁰ In contrast, Justin’s interpretation of the same verse—Genesis 1:26—identified the Logos alone as the recipient of God’s statement. Theophilus elsewhere writes, “He is God, who heals and gives life through Logos and Sophia.”⁵¹ Theophilus also speaks of the Sophia apart from the Logos in the work of creation when he writes, “His Sophia is most powerful: ‘God by Sophia founded the earth; he prepared the heavens by intelligence; by knowledge the abysses were broken up and the clouds poured forth dews.’”⁵² These passages demonstrate Theophilus’ conviction that the Sophia is an agent of creation equal with the Logos. In fact, Theophilus nowhere distinguishes the kind of work they do in creation; the work is, evidently, identical.

As important as Theophilus’ identification of the Holy Spirit with God’s Sophia and his attribution of the work of creation to the Spirit is for the development of pneumatology in general, and Irenaeus’ pneumatology in particular, two factors limit their significance and produce confusion in Theophilus’ pneumatology. First, ‘Sophia’ is not solely a title for the Third Person; it describes the Second Person as well. For example, in *Autol.* 2.10, shortly after distinguishing Logos and Sophia into two distinct entities by means of their parallel generations, Theophilus uses the title ‘Sophia’ of the Logos. He writes, “[God] used this Logos as his servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things. He is called Beginning because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him. It was he, Spirit of God and Beginning and Sophia and Power of the Most High, who came down . . .”⁵³ Theophilus makes the same identification between the Second Person and Sophia and Power in a later passage when he writes, “But his Logos, through whom he made all

49 *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 41.

50 *Autol.* 2.18, Grant, 57.

51 *Autol.* 1.7, Grant, 11.

52 *Autol.* 1.7, Grant, 11. The scripture passage here quoted comes from Prov. 3:19–20.

53 “Τούτον τὸν λόγον ἔσχεν ὑπουργὸν τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν. Οὗτος λέγεται ἀρχή, ὅτι ἀρχεῖ καὶ κυριεύει πάντων τῶν δι’ αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων. Οὗτος οὖν, ὢν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου, κατήρχετο . . .” *Autol.* 2.10, Grant, 39, 41.

things, who is his Power and Sophia, assuming the role of the Father and Lord of the universe, was present in paradise in the role of God and conversed with Adam."⁵⁴ Theophilus likely is influenced by Paul in these passages, who called the Son the "power and wisdom of God" in 1 Corinthians 1:24. Although he does not cite the scriptural reference, it might explain the change of referent for 'Sophia' in both instances. Still, the change of reference shows that the Spirit-Sophia identification has yet to be fully established.

Second, although Theophilus distinguishes between Spirit and Sophia at *Autol.* 1.7 and 2.9, it is not at all clear that every time Theophilus speaks of God's πνεῦμα, he intends the personal figure of Sophia.⁵⁵ Several uses of πνεῦμα suggest that he is referring to an impersonal, all pervasive spirit more akin to the Stoic πνεῦμα or Middle Platonic World Soul than to the Third Person.⁵⁶ For example, he writes, "[T]he air and everything under heaven is anointed, so to speak, by light and spirit."⁵⁷ Elsewhere he writes, "[T]he whole creation is surrounded by the spirit of God and the surrounding spirit, along with the creation, is enclosed by the hand of God."⁵⁸ Perhaps clearest of all is his interpretation of the πνεῦμα of Genesis 1:2, which he does not understand to be the Holy Spirit proper, as indicated in Justin, but this same generic, Stoic πνεῦμα. He writes, "The 'spirit borne over the water' was the one given by God to give life to the creation, like the soul in man, when he mingled tenuous elements together (for the spirit is tenuous and the water is tenuous), so that the spirit might nourish the water and the water with the spirit might nourish the creation by penetrating it from all sides."⁵⁹ In *Autol.* 1.7, Theophilus equates this all-pervasive spirit with the breath of God. He writes, "This is my God, the Lord of the universe, the one who alone spread out the heaven . . . who established the earth upon the waters and gave a spirit to nourish it. His breath [πνοή] gives

54 *Autol.* 2.22, Grant, 63 with minor revisions.

55 This statement is in contrast to the assumptions of older scholarship in representative works such as Bardy, SC 20:43–45 and Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 46–47.

56 This tendency leads Grant to conclude that Theophilus always distinguishes the figure he calls πνεῦμα from Σοφία, by which he means the Third Person. Grant, "Theophilus of Antioch," 251. While Grant overstates his position, it is a good indication of the ambiguity of πνεῦμα in Theophilus' work. Theophilus may at times use σοφία to refer to this cosmic World Soul as well (*Autol.* 1.6, 13), but these passages equally could refer either to the Son or the Holy Spirit. The difficulty with identifying the referent of these uses of σοφία illustrates Theophilus' lack of clarity.

57 *Autol.* 1.12, Grant, 17.

58 *Autol.* 1.5, Grant, 7.

59 *Autol.* 2.13, Grant, 49.

life to everything; if he held back the spirit for himself everything would fail.”⁶⁰ The equation of πνεῦμα and πνοή confirms the impersonal nature of this πνεῦμα and adds to the confusion of Theophilus’ intended referent with his use of πνεῦμα.

The fluency with which Theophilus uses the titles ‘Spirit’ and ‘Sophia’ as well as the indistinct functions of the Sophia/Spirit in creation and prophecy from those of the Logos suggests that Theophilus’ pneumatology lacks consistency despite its crucial developments. Moreover, the lack of a unique role of the Sophia/Spirit (both functions he performs are identical to functions of the Logos) in Theophilus’ pneumatology indicates he lacks the logic to support the presence of two agents in the economy. The logic supporting the presence of a second agent alongside the Logos in the economy did not develop until the work of Irenaeus, and this subsequent development grounds Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology to a previously unmatched degree.

Irenaeus

The previous chapter demonstrated that Irenaeus develops his understanding of the nature of the Second Person in the context of his anti-Valentinian polemic, particularly regarding the eternal relationship of God/Father and Logos/Son, since their reciprocal immanence countered the Valentinians’ topological theology that resulted in the lesser divine natures of the emanated Aeons. Irenaeus’ vision of the nature of the Third Person does not receive a parallel treatment in these early books of *Haer.*⁶¹ The Spirit is present in Irenaeus’

60 “Οὐτός μου θεός, ὁ τῶν ὅλων κύριος, ὁ τανύσας τὸν οὐρανὸν μόνος . . . ὁ θεμελιώσας τὴν γῆν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων καὶ τοὺς πνεῦμα τὸ τρέφον αὐτήν. Οὐ ἡ πνοὴ ζωογονεῖ τὸ πᾶν· ὅς ἐάν συσχηῇ τὸ πνεῦμα παρ’ ἑαυτῷ, ἐκλείψει τὸ πᾶν.” *Autol.* 1.7.

61 On this point, see Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” 94 and Jaschke, *Heilige Geist*, 175–76. One consequence of the lack of developed pneumatology in the first two or three books of *Haer.* is a general neglect or undervaluing of Irenaeus’ pneumatology in scholarship. To take a rather influential example, Harnack believed the Holy Spirit was obscure in Irenaeus’ thought, as neither his personality nor his function was well defined. However, Harnack draws largely from the early books of *Haer.* in support of this interpretation. Similarly, Orbe’s various writings on the Spirit in Irenaeus often render the Spirit an impersonal power uniting the Father and the Son. See, for example, Orbe, *La Teología del Espíritu Santo*, Estudios Valentinianos 4, *Analecta Gregoriana* 158 (Rome: Libreria editrice dell’Università Gregoriana, 1966), 464–67. There have been some exceptions to this generally negative appraisal, notably Swete who speaks of the Spirit as divine and co-equal to the Son in Irenaeus’ theology. Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 84–94. Jaschke

early writings, but he remains largely undefined and devoid of a developed work necessitating his existence alongside of the Logos. When the aspects of Irenaeus' high pneumatology—the Spirit as Sophia and Spirit as Creator traditions, respectively—appear at the end of *Haer.* 3, they have already been developed apart from any polemic.⁶²

Two factors, distinct from Irenaeus' polemic against his opponents, explain this development. The first factor is his firm conviction that the belief in a personal entity called 'the Spirit,' alongside God/Father and Logos/Son, is a traditional article of the faith handed down to the church from the apostles. The Spirit's presence in the two *regula* statements of *Haer.* 1 indicates this conviction. In the early part of *Haer.* 1, Irenaeus notes the common belief of the church, scattered throughout the world, in God the Father, in Jesus Christ the Son, "and in the Holy Spirit [*Spiritum Sanctum*, Πνεῦμα ἅγιον], who through the prophets preached the economies . . ."⁶³ Likewise, near the end of *Haer.* 1, he writes, "... not by Angels nor by any Powers divided from his thought, for the God of all things needs nothing, but by his Logos and Spirit [*Spiritum*] God made all things, ordering and governing and giving them existence."⁶⁴ While the existence of a personal Holy Spirit offers Irenaeus' polemic nothing additional to his consideration of the nature of the Logos/Son, his belief in the Holy Spirit as part of the teaching passed down from the apostles ensures that he will give the Spirit some attention and development. He demonstrates this attention and development when he turns to his own exposition of scripture

has argued for a basic unity of Irenaeus' pneumatology and more importantly a centrality of pneumatology to Irenaeus' theological vision. Jaschke, *Heilige Geist*, esp. 160–80. More recently, several works have argued for a well-developed and 'high' pneumatology in Irenaeus, notably those by Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, esp. 338–66, Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 93–104 and Briggman, *Irenaeus*, esp. 104–203. Both Barnes and Briggman perceive the development in Irenaeus' pneumatology identified here, which allows them to subordinate those passages that display an undeveloped pneumatology in the early books of *Haer.* to the more developed pneumatology of the later books of *Haer.* and *Epid.* I will follow the same method.

62 My claim refers only to the high aspects of Irenaeus' pneumatology. Certainly, Irenaeus develops other aspects of his pneumatology in relation to 'Gnostic' theologies. See, for example, *Haer.* 3.9.3, 10.4, 17.1–4. Conversely, Fantino holds that Irenaeus does develop these high pneumatological aspects, particularly the work of the Sophia alongside God and the Logos in creation, in response to 'Gnostic' theologies. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 279–87. I am unconvinced by his argument and will counter it in the text that follows.

63 *Haer.* 1.10.1. The Greek fragment comes from Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 31, 9–32. See Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 263:64–73.

64 *Haer.* 1.22.1.

in *Haer.* 3.⁶⁵ In these later books, Irenaeus is less concerned with showing the uniqueness of the Logos/Son and more concerned with interpreting scripture, where he consistently sees the work and presence of the Spirit.

The second factor causing Irenaeus' pneumatological development is his encounter with Theophilus' *Autol.* at some point during his writing of *Haer.* 3.⁶⁶ In the first two and a half books of *Haer.* Irenaeus' pneumatology resembles Justin's—the Holy Spirit is the agent of prophecy and appears alongside the Father and the Son in certain liturgical statements, but does not have a distinct role in the economy. Conversely, in the last two and a half books of *Haer.* and in the *Epid.* Irenaeus' pneumatology is more akin to Theophilus'—the Spirit is the Sophia of God, who like the Logos, is an agent of creation with an integral role in the economy. This change suggests that Irenaeus' reading of Theophilus sparked his pneumatological development. Such is the recent thesis put forward by Briggman.⁶⁷ Through the remainder of this chapter, I will assume Irenaeus' dependence on Theophilus according to the timing advanced by Briggman in order to demonstrate the significant ways Irenaeus departs from the Antiochene Apologist. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly reproduce Briggman's argument.

Briggman's thesis that Irenaeus reads Theophilus' *Autol.* at some point during the writing of *Haer.* 3 rests on two primary points. The first is Irenaeus' interpretation of Psalm 33/2:6, “τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ . . .” (LXX). Irenaeus quotes the Psalm in three places, namely, *Haer.* 1.22.1, *Haer.* 3.8.3, and *Epid.* 5. In the first two uses, Irenaeus quotes the verse in full and interprets it according to what I will refer to as a one agent theology of creation. That is, Irenaeus' exegesis of the verse witnesses to God creating all things through the one agent of the Logos. Irenaeus derives this interpretation both by the presence of λόγος in the passage, which he takes as a reference to the agent of the Logos, and by the image of God's mouth (στόμα) and its implied connection to speech. As a result, the πνεῦμα of the verse is taken not as ‘spirit’ but as the ‘breath’ of God's mouth, which is another

65 Briggman notes that *Haer.* 3 marks the beginning of Irenaeus' pneumatological expansion. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 46–96.

66 The influence of Theophilus upon Irenaeus has been noted by past scholars, notably, Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, 44–45. Unfortunately, Kretschmar, as indicative of scholarship stemming from Loofs, lacks attention to the clear places in which Irenaeus alters Theophilus' understanding. He consistently dismisses the differences by assuming that certain aspects of Irenaeus' understanding not evident in *Autol.* must have come from Theophilus' lost work. Thus, his ideas present merely a chastened form of Loofs' thesis.

67 Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 97–103.

reference to the Logos. Conversely, in the *Epid.* 5 passage, Irenaeus interprets the verse as witnessing to a two agent theology of creation. That is, the verse witnesses to God creating all things through the two agents of the Logos and the Spirit. Irenaeus arrives at this alternate interpretation by quoting a variant of the verse—the same variant that occurs in Theophilus' *Autol.* 1.7—which leaves off the last three words, “τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ.” Consequently, the πνεῦμα is disassociated from the image of ‘mouth’ and, therefore, the sense of ‘breath’ it took in Irenaeus' first two uses. Irenaeus is then free to interpret the πνεῦμα of the passage not as the Logos but as a second agent called the Spirit. The *Epid.* 5 use of the passage parallels Theophilus' use while the former two do not, suggesting both that Irenaeus gains the unique interpretation from Theophilus and that he is not aware of it until sometime after writing *Haer.* 3.8.3.

Briggman's second point is that the concentration of parallels between Theophilus' and Irenaeus' respective works occurring between *Haer.* 3.22.4 and 3.24.1 suggest a proximity between Irenaeus' acquisition of Theophilus' work and his writing *Haer.* 3.22.1 through 3.24.1. These parallels include Adam and Eve's creation as innocent children, their disobedience as a cause of the fall, and the remedial value of death. This constellation of images is most plausibly explained by a recent reading of Theophilus for in no other part of Irenaeus' work is the influence of Theophilus so concentrated. Thus, these two factors lead Briggman to locate the time of Irenaeus' initial reading of Theophilus' *Autol.* sometime after he wrote *Haer.* 3.8.3, likely around the time of his writing *Haer.* 3.22.4.

According to this thesis, then, Theophilus is not the original source of Irenaeus' most important pneumatological features, namely, Spirit as Sophia and Spirit as Creator, for they both appear in *Haer.* 1–2, prior to Irenaeus' knowledge of Theophilus.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, these ideas remain significantly underdeveloped suggesting that Theophilus' pneumatology provided the spark for Irenaeus to develop these themes further in his own exposition of scripture (which, as we will see, he immediately proceeds to do). Nonetheless, Irenaeus also may have found many of Theophilus' pneumatological ideas unsatisfactory in light of several identifiable differences between the two figures' use of the same traditions and ideas. Indeed, as I will argue, Irenaeus develops certain aspects of Theophilus' pneumatology into a more cohesive system by providing the logic and consistency missing from Theophilus' account.

68 The Spirit as Creator tradition appears as part of the *regula* in *Haer.* 1.22.1, quoted above and the first identification of the Holy Spirit of the *regula* with the Sophia of God comes in *Haer.* 2.30.9, quoted below.

The Holy Spirit as the Sophia of God

One of the central features of Irenaeus' pneumatology is his use of 'Sophia' (Σοφία, *Sapientia*) to refer to the Spirit, which he likely acquired from a Jewish or Jewish Christian source perhaps during his time in Smyrna.⁶⁹ However, the title is not applied consistently throughout his works. Indeed, although Irenaeus speaks several times of God's attribute of wisdom in *Haer.* 1–2,⁷⁰ he uses the title 'Sophia' of the Third Person, the Holy Spirit of the *regula*, only once prior to reading Theophilus. Near the end of *Haer.* 2, he writes, "This one alone is found to be God, who has made all things, alone Omnipotent and alone Father, founding and making all things—both visible and invisible, both perceptible and imperceptible, both heavenly and earthly—by the Logos of his power, and he fitted and arranged all things by his Sophia . . . he is Father, he is God, he is Founder, he is Maker, he is Creator, who made those things by himself, that is, by his Logos and his Sophia—heaven and earth, and the seas, and all things that are in them . . ."⁷¹ The passage is notable insofar as it makes the Spirit–Sophia identification, suggested by the parallel placement with Logos that mirrors the *regula* structure of Son and Spirit (e.g., *Haer.* 1.22.1), but the identification remains undeveloped. Irenaeus provides no scriptural references to support the identification, and he does not use the entity of Sophia (or the implied meaning of the name) to further his argument in the immediate context.

69 The Jewish character of these images has been well documented and does not need to be revisited here. For example, see Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, 34–36, 27–35, 59–61. Although we lack the original Greek for several passages where Irenaeus makes the link between the Spirit and Σοφία (represented by the Latin *Sapientia*), to maintain consistency, I will consistently refer to the Spirit in Irenaeus' work according to the Greek title 'Sophia.' Σοφία is universally accepted as the original of *Sapientia*.

70 *Haer.* 2.25.1–2 and 2.30.3. In *Haer.* 2.25.1, Irenaeus writes, "...but with great wisdom [*sapientia*] and care [*diligentia*], all things have been made by God, clearly fitted and adorned, and his Logos formed both things ancient and those in the latest times..." The difficulty with taking *sapientia* as a reference to the Third Person in this passage is the presence of the word *diligentia*, which is connected to *sapientia* with *et* indicating that both words function in the same manner. As *diligentia* nowhere else refers to a separate entity, both words in this context more likely refer to qualities of God and not the Third Person of the *regula*. *Haer.* 2.25.1, then, is a passage espousing a one agent theology of creation, much more indicative of Irenaeus' theology in *Haer.* 1 and 2.

71 "...solus hic Deus invenitur, qui omnia fecit, solus Omnipotens et solus Pater, condens et faciens omnia, et visibilia et invisibilia et sensibilia et insensata et caelestia et terrena, Verbo virtutis suae, et omnia aptavit et disposuit Sapientia sua . . . hic Pater, hic Deus, hic Conditor, hic Factor, hic Fabricator, qui fecit ea per semetipsum, hoc est per Verbum et per Sapientiam suam, caelum et terram et maria et omnia quae in eis sunt . . ." *Haer.* 2.30.9.

Most importantly, for my purposes, although Irenaeus identifies the Sophia as a second agent of creation alongside the Logos in *Haer.* 2.30.9, he does not identify a creative function for the Sophia that is distinct from that of the Logos. At first, Irenaeus appears to identify two distinct creative works—the Logos “founded and made” while the Sophia “fitted and arranged.” Nevertheless, at the end of the statement Irenaeus speaks of the creative work of the Logos and Sophia with the same term (*fecit*), a statement that parallels that of *Haer.* 1.22.1 and fits better with the logic of a one agent theology of creation that generally dominates the theology of *Haer.* 1–3. In other words, although there are two agents in *Haer.* 2.30.9, they perform the same work. Additionally, after this passage, Irenaeus returns to a one agent theology of creation in the beginning chapters of *Haer.* 3⁷² and the use of ‘Sophia’ as a pneumatological title is absent until a passage near the end of the book, written at a point after which Irenaeus has read Theophilus’ *Autol.* This vacillation between one and two agents, coupled with the general underuse of the Spirit as Sophia tradition in the first three books of *Haer.* suggests that, despite the reference to Sophia in *Haer.* 2.30.9, Irenaeus had yet to assimilate it as a pneumatological title or grasp the advantages it could give his traditional understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.

The first connection between the Holy Spirit and Sophia Irenaeus makes after he has read Theophilus immediately shows the latter’s influence. Irenaeus writes, “[W]e should know that he who made and formed and breathed in them the breath of life, and nourishes us by creation, establishing all things by his Logos, and binding them together by his Sophia—this is he who is the only true God . . .”⁷³ Here, Irenaeus uses two separate verbs to describe the creative work of the Logos and Sophia respectively—the Logos ‘establishes’ (*confirmare*) all things, while the Sophia ‘binds together’ (*compingere*) all things. Nonetheless, unlike the possible distinction of creative works in the first part of *Haer.* 2.30.9, Irenaeus makes the distinction permanent insofar as after this reference he never again conflates the Logos’ and Sophia’s respective creative functions without a specific reason. In other words, from this point onward, all general descriptions of the creative act in Irenaeus’ work feature two agents *with two distinct creative functions*. For reasons that must await the next section for explanation, it is the influence of Theophilus’ *Autol.*, which he read just shortly before writing this passage, that leads Irenaeus to develop and consistently maintain

72 See especially *Haer.* 3.4.2, 3.8.3 and 3.11.1–2.

73 “... sciremus quoniam qui fecit et plasmavit et insufflationem vitae insufflavit in eis et per conditionem nutrit nos, Verbo suo confirmans et Sapientia compingens omnia, hic est qui est solus verus Deus . . .” *Haer.* 3.24.2.

a unique creative function for the Spirit. In the current context, the *Haer.* 3.24.2 passage demonstrates that by the end of *Haer.* 3, Irenaeus has assimilated the Spirit as Sophia tradition inasmuch as he begins to develop its potential for understanding the nature of the Holy Spirit of the *regula*.

Not surprisingly, the fourth book of *Haer.* displays Irenaeus' most consistent and most significant use of the Spirit as Sophia tradition. The reason for this development is that Irenaeus now has acquired from Theophilus the scriptural passages lacking in his passing reference to Sophia in *Haer.* 2.30.9, which serve to ground the tradition according to his preferred, anti-speculative methodology. As Briggman observes, "His later contact with Theophilus, then, provided the hitherto-lacking textual basis and intellectual categories to further develop the Spirit-Wisdom identification that Irenaeus already held."⁷⁴ Specifically, Theophilus provides Irenaeus three passages in support of the connection, namely, Genesis 1:26, "And God said, 'Let us make man according to our image and likeness . . .,'" Proverbs 3:19, "God by Sophia founded the earth, and by prudence he prepared the heavens," and Psalm 33/2:6, "by his Logos the heavens were made firm and by his Spirit all their power." The first two verses will factor into the present discussion while I will reserve consideration of the third passage until the next section.

Irenaeus makes the most use of the Genesis 1:26 verse.⁷⁵ Although the Genesis passage does not make specific mention of Sophia, Theophilus provides the interpretation that Irenaeus accepts as authoritative. Theophilus writes, "[God] regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands. Furthermore, God is found saying 'Let us make man after the image and likeness' as if he needed assistance; but he said 'Let us make' to none other

⁷⁴ Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 128.

⁷⁵ Irenaeus uses Gen. 1:26 twice before reading Theophilus, but both times occur in the course of his exposition of 'Gnostic' theology (*Haer.* 1.24.1, 1.30.6). He quotes the verse for his own purposes in *Haer.* 3.23.2, after having read Theophilus, but in the context of speaking of Adam—neither the Logos/Son nor Sophia/Spirit are mentioned in this interpretation. From *Haer.* 4 on, Irenaeus returns to Gen. 1:26 several times and uses Theophilus' interpretation of the presence of two agents to whom God speaks. See *Haer.* 4.Pref.4, 4.20.1, 5.1.3. In those places where he quotes the verse to refer to the Logos, alone (*Haer.* 5.15.4 and *Epid.* 55), the context is not a general description of creation, in which case the absence of Sophia would be problematic given his integral role to the process, but an explanation of the nature of the Logos made flesh. Irenaeus suggests through Gen. 1:26 that the one who created in the beginning assumed his own creation in the incarnation. The Spirit's presence is not needed in these contexts and, thus, cannot be interpreted as a reversion to a one agent theology of creation.

than his own Logos and his own Sophia.”⁷⁶ Following Theophilus, as opposed to Justin’s one agent interpretation of the verse, Irenaeus writes, “For God did not need [angels] to make what he himself had determined to do prior, as if he did not have his own hands. For with him always were the Logos and the Sophia, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom he freely and spontaneously made all things, to whom also he speaks, saying: ‘Let us make man after our image and likeness . . .’”⁷⁷

Irenaeus, like Theophilus, argues here that God did not need an intermediate being to create, but that he created through his Logos and Sophia who are one with God, as demonstrated by the ‘hands of God’ metaphor. Nevertheless, Irenaeus’ passage shows a precision in language that Theophilus’ passage lacks. Irenaeus makes the connection between titles in the same passage—“the Logos and the Sophia, the Son and the Spirit”—leaving no doubt regarding the identity of the Sophia and Spirit as the same being, the third entity alongside God/Father and the Logos/Son in the teaching of the apostles. Unlike the ambiguity of the connection he may have found in Theophilus, Irenaeus wants to leave no doubt that when he speaks of the Sophia, he means the Holy Spirit of the *regula*.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Irenaeus makes a similar identification when he writes, “. . . for [God’s] offspring and his form [*sua progenies et figuratio sua*] serve him in all things, that is, the Son and the Spirit, the Logos and the Sophia, whom all angels serve and to whom they are subject.”⁷⁹ Again, in the *Epid.*, he writes, “This God, then, is glorified by His Word, who is His Son, continually, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all.”⁸⁰ Theophilus never made the identification between Sophia and the Holy Spirit obvious, which resulted in disparate interpretations as to the identities of the Sophia and Spirit as well as a fluidity of both terms. No such fluidity exists in Irenaeus’ usage of the pneumatological title. In Irenaeus’ mind, ‘Sophia’ is linked with the Holy Spirit to the same degree that ‘Logos’ is linked with the Son.

76 *Autol.* 2.18, Grant, 57.

77 *Haer.* 4.20.1.

78 Robinson came close to this thesis when he writes with regard to Theophilus’ pneumatology, “Is it possible that it is in view of the indistinctness of this very teaching [*viz.* that the Spirit is Sophia] that Irenaeus so often reiterates that the Word and Wisdom are the Son and the Spirit, and that these are the Hands of God? Theophilus has almost said it himself: but he has stopped short of saying it . . . Irenaeus was not on wholly new ground in this particular matter, even if he trod it much more firmly than his predecessor.” Robinson, *Demonstration*, 59–60.

79 *Haer.* 4.7.4.

80 *Epid.* 10, Behr, 46.

Irenaeus' clear identification of the Holy Spirit with Sophia allows him to place more restrictions upon his application of the title. In Theophilus' understanding, 'Sophia' could refer to both the Holy Spirit and the Son (and possibly the impersonal World Soul). For Irenaeus, once he has read Theophilus, 'Sophia' consistently and unambiguously is identified with the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the *regula*. The consistency is displayed both by the precise language he uses in the passages quoted above and in his consistent employment of Jewish Wisdom literature, notably Proverbs 8, to refer to the Holy Spirit and not to the Son. For example, Irenaeus writes, "And that the Logos, that is the Son, was always with the Father, we have demonstrated many times. And that also Sophia, which is the Spirit, was with him before the whole creation, as he says through Solomon . . ." ⁸¹ Irenaeus does not support his statement regarding the eternity of the Logos/Son here, since this argument consumes a majority of *Haer.* 2. Accordingly, he can assume that his reader is convinced of the Logos' eternal nature. However, as I have noted, the Spirit did not receive the same attention in the early books of *Haer.* 2. Therefore, Irenaeus offers for the first time in this passage several texts (beyond Genesis 1:26) supporting the eternity of the Sophia/Spirit. Following the previous statement, he quotes Proverbs 3:19–20, the second scriptural passage he acquires from Theophilus, and Proverbs 8:22–25 and 8:27–31, the latter of which Theophilus had used in regard to the Logos. ⁸² In each case, Irenaeus identifies the pre-existent Sophia figure of Jewish Wisdom literature with the Holy Spirit. ⁸³

81 "Et quoniam Verbum, hoc est Filius, semper cum Patre erat, per multa demonstravimus. Quoniam autem et Sapientia, quae est Spiritus, erat apud eum ante omnem constitutionem, per Salomonem ait . . ." *Haer.* 4.20.3.

82 *Autol.* 2.10.

83 Conversely, Fantino has argued that Irenaeus also is inconsistent in the Sophia–Spirit identification, citing as evidence *Haer.* 5.24.1 where Irenaeus refers to the figure of Prov. 8:15 as the Logos. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 289–90. Although the reference of the pre-existent figure of Prov. 8 to the Logos represents a departure from Irenaeus' normal manner of speaking, the reference does not prove inconsistent with his identification of the Spirit and Sophia. In *Haer.* 4.20.3, where Irenaeus uses Proverbs to make the Sophia–Spirit identification, he does so on the strength of either Proverbs' use of the title 'Sophia' for the pre-existent figure (Prov. 3:19) or the reference to the creative work of that personified being apart from the title (Prov. 8:22–25, 27–31). Prov. 8:15 does not identify the speaking figure with Sophia or with the work of creation, nor does Irenaeus invoke the verse to speak of the Logos as Sophia or to speak of the creative work of the pre-existent figure of Proverbs. In fact, *Haer.* 5.24.1 provides a different context, altogether. In accord with his emphasis on recapitulation, Irenaeus desires to show in *Haer.* 5.24.1 that the devil is a liar both in the beginning and in the end. Prov. 8:15 fits with this argument because of its reference to kings, princes, and chiefs—the passage proves that God through his Logos

This interpretation of Proverbs is remarkable considering the strong tradition—a tradition with which Irenaeus otherwise identifies—that interpreted the personified Sophia figure in Proverbs as the Son (Paul, Justin). In fact, this tradition is so strong that even those figures prior to Irenaeus sympathetic to the identification between the Holy Spirit and the Jewish Wisdom figure (Athenagoras, Theophilus) still attributed the figure of Proverbs 8 to the Son. Irenaeus' departure from this tradition resulted from his firm belief in the personal, pre-existent figure of Sophia/Spirit who (if not earlier, at least by the later books of *Haer.*) is parallel in nature and stature to the Logos/Son.

Although the application of the title 'Sophia' allows Irenaeus a means by which to speak of the *kind* of creative work the Holy Spirit performs, as I will develop in the next section, the primary advantage the pneumatological title offers Irenaeus, and thus the reason he is drawn to it at the end of *Haer.* 2, is its inherent logic that includes the Spirit of the *regula* with God and the Logos as an eternal being.⁸⁴ Thus, the Spirit is included with the Father and Son in Irenaeus' understanding precisely because, like the Logos, he exists eternally as God's Wisdom, as he writes in *Haer.* 2.30.9, "[God] is Creator, who made those things by himself, that is, by his Logos and his Sophia..." As God's eternal Wisdom, he exists on the side of God/Father and Logos/Son in the Creator/creature divide. Irenaeus writes, "...indeed, [Isaiah] classifies the Spirit [*Spiritus*] as peculiar to God, which in the last times he pours out upon the human race by the adoption of sons, but [he classifies] breath [*afflatum*]

is in control of the leaders of the world. Therefore, the devil is a liar in his wilderness temptations when he claimed authority over all earthly kingdoms. The identification of the pre-existent figure of Proverbs makes little difference to Irenaeus' argument in this context. In contrast to the implications of Fantino's argument, Irenaeus nowhere calls the Logos 'Sophia,' as Theophilus did.

- 84 On the other hand, Briggman believes that the Holy Spirit's specific creative work in completing/perfecting/governing, as a function of his title 'Sophia,' offers the primary reason for Irenaeus' use of 'Sophia' as a title for the Third Person. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 136ff. While I certainly agree that Irenaeus continues to exploit the pneumatological title for its abilities to secure a separate work alongside the Logos in creation, it cannot be the primary reason Irenaeus uses the title. This is evident, as I will show presently, simply because Irenaeus uses the title 'Sophia' prior to his development of a distinct creative work of the Spirit. And as I will demonstrate in the next section, the development of a separate work of the Spirit comes only after he reads Theophilus, long after he has used 'Sophia' as a title for the Third Person.

ordinarily in creation, and he makes clear it is a created work. But that which has been made is a different thing from him who makes it. The breath, therefore, is temporal, but the Spirit eternal.”⁸⁵ The logic of these arguments, which are simply an alternative means of expressing the Creator/creature divide, suggests that the Sophia/Spirit, like the Logos/Son, is neither a creature with a starting point nor a ‘remotely distant power’ from the Father. Rather, he is in the Father with the Logos from all eternity and shares with these two entities the same quality of divinity.

Nevertheless, the Spirit is not merely an indistinguished, impersonal attribute of God, as Irenaeus clearly showed with the Logos. Indeed, the parallel titles of ‘Logos’ and ‘Sophia,’ brought together at the end of *Haer.* 2, allow Irenaeus to apply every rhetorical argument made in favor of the Second Person’s eternal nature to the Third Person as well. As Theophilus had concluded that the Sophia came out of God along with the Logos, Irenaeus concludes through the same parallel use of titles that the Spirit eternally coexists with the Father alongside the eternally co-existent Logos/Son. He writes, “For with [God] always were the Logos and the Sophia, the Son and the Spirit . . .”⁸⁶ A few paragraphs later, he elaborates on this point when he writes, “And that the Logos, that is the Son, was always with the Father, we have demonstrated many times. And that also Sophia, which is the Spirit, was with him before the whole creation . . .”⁸⁷ The implication from Irenaeus’ conviction in the eternal coexistence of the Sophia/Spirit with God/Father, and more generally from the parallel positions of the Logos and Sophia relative to God is that Irenaeus understands the Holy Spirit as divine in the same degree that the Son is divine. Put another way, both entities possess the same quality of divinity, which in turn, is the same quality of divinity as the Father.

85 “*.. Spiritum quidem proprie in Deo deputans, quem in novissimis temporibus effudit per adoptionem filiorum in genus humanum, afflatum autem communiter in conditione, et facturam ostendens illum. Aliud autem est quod factum est ab eo qui fecit. Afflutus igitur temporalis, Spiritus autem sempiternus.*” *Haer.* 5.12.2. Immediately prior to this statement, Irenaeus quotes Isaiah 42:5, “Thus says the Lord, who made heaven and established it, who founded the earth and the things therein, and gave breath to the people upon it, and Spirit to those walking upon it” and 57:16, “For the Spirit shall go forth from me, and I have made every breath.” These passages are not cited because they support an eternal Holy Spirit *per se*, but because they establish a distinction between Spirit (Πνεῦμα, *Spiritus*) and breath (πνοή, *afflatus*), a distinction that Irenaeus exploits in order to demonstrate the eternal nature of the former.

86 *Haer.* 4.20.1.

87 *Haer.* 4.20.3. For Latin, see above p. 172n81.

Irenaeus has already argued for the lack of spatial distance between God/Father and Logos/Son; rather, as spiritual entities, they indwell or interpenetrate one another in a relationship of 'reciprocal immanence.' By virtue of the eternal Sophia/Spirit's parallel nature with the Logos/Son, the Sophia/Spirit must, therefore, interpenetrate God/Father as well. Jaschke puts it this way, "Since Irenaeus said directly before [the statement in *Haer.* 4.20.3] that Word and Wisdom are always with the Father, and now he wants to retrieve for the Spirit what he already proved for the Son, then [the formula] kept strictly for the Son, stated always-being-in-the Father, also refers to the Spirit."⁸⁸ Notably, Irenaeus does not need to argue for the spiritual nature of the Third Person, as he did for the First and Second Persons in order to justify his positing of their reciprocal immanence, because the Third Person's spiritual nature is implied by his traditional name, Πνεῦμα.

Before concluding this section, I need to note two caveats that distinguish Irenaeus' pneumatology from his Logos theology. First, Irenaeus nowhere expresses the conviction of the indwelling of the Sophia/Spirit in God (and the Logos) in the same straightforward manner as he did with the Logos in the polemic of *Haer.* 2. The reason for this lack of specificity is that the arguments for the reciprocal immanence of the Logos and God occurred prior to Irenaeus' development and full application of the Spirit as Sophia tradition. Once he concludes the polemic proper and turns to his own exposition of scripture in *Haer.* 3, he does not revisit the fine points of his anti-Valentinian argument. Nevertheless, the logic of the Creator/creature divide as well as the parallel use of the titles 'Logos' and 'Sophia' strongly imply the Spirit's inclusion in the reciprocal immanence of Father and Son. Second, Irenaeus does not explore the generation or origin of the Sophia/Spirit as he did with the Logos/Son.⁸⁹ Given Irenaeus' relatively 'high' pneumatology, this omission has perplexed some commentators. Nonetheless, in my reading, Irenaeus remains fully consistent. His normal method seeks to avoid such speculative matters because they reach beyond the bounds of scripture. He makes an exception with the generation of the Logos/Son in order to critique the Valentinian emanation theory. Once that polemic is complete, he does not need to return to these speculative matters in reference to the Spirit.

The lack of these components in Irenaeus' discussion of the Sophia/Spirit, then, should not lead to the conclusion that Irenaeus understands the Spirit to be of a lesser quality of divinity than the Son. Rather, it is precisely his understanding of their parallel divine natures, as God's Logos and God's Sophia

88 Jaschke, *Heilige Geist*, 204.

89 On this point, see Barnes, "Irenaeus' Trinitarian Theology," 93–96.

respectively, that makes intelligible the inclusion of the Spirit with the Father and Son in the *regula fidei* handed down from the apostles, as well as the liturgical tradition that named the Spirit as the third name, along with the Father and the Son, into which new believers are baptized.⁹⁰ Although Justin possessed similar liturgical and traditional statements, he lacked the logic necessary to make these statements intelligible. Irenaeus provides that logic through his development and application of the Spirit as Sophia tradition.

The Holy Spirit Creates

While Irenaeus justifies the eternal relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father by attributing to him the title of ‘Sophia,’ he justifies the Sophia/Spirit as a second agent of creation by attributing to him a creative work in the economy that is *distinct* from the creative work of the Logos/Son. As noted, Irenaeus first makes definitive this distinction of creative works in *Haer.* 3.24.2, after having read Theophilus’ *Autol.* In that passage, Irenaeus writes, “[W]e should know that he who made and formed and breathed in them the breath of life, and nourishes us by creation, establishing all things by his Logos, and binding them together by his Sophia—this is he who is the only true God . . .”⁹¹ According to this passage, the Sophia completes God’s creative work by “binding together” the work God established through the Logos.

As Irenaeus develops in later passages, this “binding together” work of the Third Person, a function of the very meaning of the title ‘Sophia,’ entails uniting the individual pieces or parts of creation into a coherent whole.⁹² In other words, the scattered and disparate parts created through the Logos take a perfect and complete form of creation through the work of the Sophia. Thus, no longer does the Logos perform everything that the Sophia could do in the work of creation, as was the case with Theophilus’ understanding and that of the first two and a half books of *Haer.* According to this passage, both the Logos and the Sophia have their respective, creative duties; creation is no longer complete without the creative agency of the Sophia. Still, although his role is different, the Spirit is as much a creator or creative agent as the Son is, indicated by the Spirit’s inclusion with the Creator in the Creator/creature divide, as we saw in

⁹⁰ *Epid.* 7.

⁹¹ *Haer.* 3.24.2. For Latin, see above p. 169n73.

⁹² Although I disagree with him that this function of Sophia is the primary reason Irenaeus is drawn to the pneumatological title, Briggman’s analysis of Irenaeus’ use of the title ‘Sophia’ to develop a unique work in creation is illuminating. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 132–45.

the previous section.⁹³ It is for this reason that Irenaeus can at times refer to the Spirit (as he can the Son) as 'Creator' (e.g., *Haer.* 4.31.2) without any confusion of roles.⁹⁴

Irenaeus' identification of a unique creative function of the Spirit is unprecedented. Justin and Athenagoras (representing the dominant trajectory of second century theology), did not attribute a creative function to the Spirit. Theophilus does but, significantly, does not distinguish between the creative work of the Logos and Sophia. Thus, while Irenaeus is not the first figure to identify a two agent theology of creation, he is the first to provide the logic that necessitates the Spirit's participation in the work of creation with the Father and the Son.

Because this move is without precedent, those scholars who identify a distinct creative work of the Spirit have rightly searched for Irenaeus' motive.⁹⁵ Two recent proposals are worth noting. First, Fantino has argued that Irenaeus'

93 Conversely, some scholars use the distinction of works to deny that the Spirit creates in Irenaeus' understanding. Orbe's theory is, again, the most developed example of this position. Arguing that Irenaeus counters Trinitarian speculations in Ptolemaean Valentinianism, Orbe claims on the strength of *Haer.* 4.7.4 and *Haer.* 4.20.1 that Irenaeus connects the work of giving matter form with the Logos alone (corresponding to the static 'image' of *Haer.* 4.20.1) and the work of sanctifying with the Spirit alone (corresponding to the dynamic 'likeness' of *Haer.* 4.20.1). Orbe, *Espíritu Santo*, 464–67. According to Orbe's interpretation, the strength of the evidence of the Spirit's parallel status to the Logos in relation to the Father disappears. However, the very passages Orbe used to support a theory that removes the creative function from the Spirit (*Haer.* 4.7.4 and 4.20.1) actually combine the creative works of both agents into one, the reasons for which I will address momentarily. Thus, in these passages, the Spirit's creative function seems most apparent. Irenaeus never says, as Orbe claims, that the Spirit perfects the man the Son *already* created; rather, Irenaeus holds that both agents cooperate in the formation of humanity, a statement supported by the parallel titles of 'Logos' and 'Sophia.'

94 As Steenberg has shown, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 71–80.

95 Barnes and Steenberg are notable exceptions here. Barnes only asserts that Irenaeus' encounter with passages such as Ps. 33/2:6 and a two agent theology of creation (likely in the work of Theophilus, although Barnes does not specify) led to the change in his own understanding from *Haer.* 1–2 to his more mature theology. Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 98–99. Barnes does not note the difference between Irenaeus and Theophilus on this count but, apparently, assumes that a two agent theology of creation presumes two distinct creative functions. On the other hand, Steenberg identifies Irenaeus' reading of scripture as the source for his understanding of the distinction of works. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 64–80. In so doing, he overlooks the change that occurs in the process of Irenaeus' writings, wrongly assuming that the distinction of functions between the Logos and Sophia runs through the whole of his works.

motive is found in his polemical response to the Trinitarian scheme of 'Gnostic' understandings of creation, using approximately the same figures (the 'Gnostic' Trinitarian model, according to Fantino, is Logos-Sophia-Demiurge). In fact, although Fantino argues this thesis with every aspect of Irenaeus' theology, he is clearest on the influence of 'Gnosticism' precisely at this point. He writes, "[T]he critique of Gnosticism is a decisive factor which has led Irenaeus to formulate the Trinitarian scheme Father-Word-Wisdom to the work in the creation and in the economy."⁹⁶ To support this claim, however, Fantino has to conflate *Haer.* 3.24.2 with 2.30.9, implying that Irenaeus distinguishes the work of the Logos and the Sophia in both passages. Nevertheless, as I have shown, Irenaeus does not make the distinction of creative works permanent until *Haer.* 3.24.2. If the distinction of creative works was occasioned by the 'Gnostic' Trinitarian understanding of creation, as Fantino claims, one would expect the *Haer.* 2.30.9 passage, situated in the midst of the polemic, to maintain this distinction of works or at the very least to develop it to a greater degree. That Irenaeus does not develop or utilize the distinction until the later books of *Haer.*, after he has completed the rhetorical polemic proper, suggests that something other than the polemic with 'Gnosticism' occasioned the development of a distinct creative work of the Spirit. Briggman suggests an alternative source, namely, that Irenaeus possesses an understanding of the impersonal wisdom of God as active in making creation a harmonious place, an idea that is consonant with Wisdom literature in the biblical tradition, but more likely comes from Hellenistic meditations on the harmony of melody coming from a lyre.⁹⁷ Because Irenaeus is already familiar with a Sophia-Spirit tradition from a Jewish source, he is able, in later books, to attribute to the Spirit the "binding together" work that was a function of God's wisdom. Briggman writes, "Irenaeus' concept of the wisdom of God [as a quality of God] prepares the way for, and to a certain extent leads to, his idea of the Wisdom of God—his understanding of the Spirit as Wisdom."⁹⁸ While I agree that there is a seamless connection between the function of God's wisdom and the work of Sophia in making creation harmonious, this does not constitute a motive. The question

96 Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 285. For the whole argument, see pp. 283–87 and Fantino, "Théologie de la Création," 124ff.

97 This image appears in *Haer.* 2.25.1–2. Like Briggman, I argued above that the presence of *sapientia* in this passage does not refer to the Third Person. Briggman does note that the title 'Sophia' undergoes a certain "cleansing" from 'Gnostic' theologies which allows Irenaeus to use it positively, but he does not conclude from this observation that Irenaeus is drawn to the title because of its presence in 'Gnosticism.' Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 132–34.

98 Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 136, italics added. For the whole argument, see pp. 129–36.

remains as to *why* Irenaeus made the transition from a one agent theology in his early books (including *Haer.* 2.30.9, where Sophia is present as a second agent but does not do anything different from the Logos) to a two agent theology in his later works.

As noted, Irenaeus does not identify a creative function of Sophia distinct from that of the Logos until *Haer.* 3.24.2. Given the proximity of Irenaeus' reading of *Autol.* to *Haer.* 3.24.2, I propose that the impetus for Irenaeus to distinguish the creative works of the Logos and Sophia is Theophilus' failure to do so.⁹⁹ From reading Theophilus' account of creation in *Autol.*, Irenaeus has perceived the need for a logic that would necessitate the creative actions of Sophia alongside the Logos. The creative work of the Sophia in "binding together all things" provides that logic, and Irenaeus maintains the distinction through the remainder of his works.

Accordingly, following *Haer.* 3.24.2, Irenaeus continues to speak of two agents in creation, emphasizing the forming work of the Logos and the completing or perfecting work of the Sophia. For example, he writes, "God who made [*fecit*] all things by the Logos, and adorned [*adornavit*] [all things] by the Sophia..."¹⁰⁰ Likewise, following the three quotations of Proverbs regarding the creative agency of the Sophia/Spirit noted previously, Irenaeus writes, "Therefore, [there is] one God, who by the Logos and Sophia made and arranged all things."¹⁰¹ Here, the parallelism of the two phrases "Logos and Sophia/made and arranged" establishes the distinct works. Elsewhere, Irenaeus writes, "... with the Father planning and commanding, with the Son assisting and forming, and with the Spirit nurturing and completing..."¹⁰² In each of these passages, Irenaeus uses distinct verbs in relation to the Logos and Sophia. Those verbs associated with the Sophia (*adornare*, *aptare*, *compingere*, *nutrire*, *augere*) are located in the same semantic field, suggesting a developed notion of a creative work of the Sophia separate from that of the Logos.

99 The reason Briggman does not see Irenaeus' reading of Theophilus as the impetus toward the development of a unique creative function of the Spirit is because he interprets *Haer.* 2.30.9, written before Irenaeus read Theophilus, as already witnessing to two separate creative works of the Logos and Sophia. See above pp. 169–70 and 173–74 for my understanding of the passage.

100 "*Deo qui omnia Verbo fecit et Sapientia adornavit...*" *Haer.* 4.20.2.

101 "*Unus igitur Deus, qui Verbo et Sapientia fecit et aptavit omnia.*" *Haer.* 4.20.4.

102 "... *Patre quidem bene sentiente et iubente, Filio vero ministrante et formante, Spiritu vero nutriende et augmente...*" *Haer.* 4.38.3. I have here translated the Latin to show the words used to describe the creative function of the Spirit. I will revisit this passage in a different context below where I will use the Greek fragment. See below p. 210n67.

This distinction of works and the developed notion of the Sophia's creative work exist most clearly in the *Epid.*, in which Irenaeus produces a scriptural passage, Psalm 33/2:6, to substantiate both the Spirit as Creator tradition and the distinction of his creative work from that of the Logos to which Irenaeus has consistently alluded since *Haer.* 3.24.2. As with Genesis 1:26 and Proverbs 3:19–20, Irenaeus acquires this verse and its interpretation from Theophilus, who wrote, “God made all things through his Logos and his Sophia, for ‘by his Logos the heavens were made firm and by his Spirit all their power.’”¹⁰³ Irenaeus provides a similar interpretation when he writes, “And God is verbal, therefore He made created things by the Word; and God is Spirit, so that He adorned all things by the Spirit, as the prophet also says, ‘By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all their power by His Spirit’. Thus, since the Word ‘establishes’, that is, works bodily and confers existence, while the Spirit arranges and forms the various ‘powers’, so rightly is the Son called Word and the Spirit the Wisdom of God.”¹⁰⁴ Theophilus’ interpretation of Psalm 33/2:6 is the clearest of any of the verses Irenaeus cites in favor of the two agent theology of creation, for it alone references both a Λόγος and a Πνεῦμα in the creative process.

Significantly, the scriptural passage says nothing in support of Irenaeus’ peculiar theology of a distinction of creative works. Irenaeus adds this component to align Theophilus’ interpretation with the theology he has developed since *Haer.* 3.24.2. Nevertheless, Irenaeus implies that he distinguishes between the creative works of the Logos and the Sophia on the strength of the Psalm. In order to do this, he associates the verb ‘to establish’ with the Logos, alone. He then interprets the work of establishing as bringing about the existence of the world, the work attributed only to the Logos throughout *Haer.* 4 and 5. At this point, his understanding of the Psalm is plausible. However, to develop a second work for the Spirit Irenaeus has to augment the Psalm with the words “arranging and forming,” works which he then associates with the Spirit alone. Although these verbs are absent from the Psalm, Irenaeus superficially connects his addition of the verbs to the content of the Psalm by describing the object of the Spirit’s “arranging and forming” as the δύνάμεις (compare δύνάμις in the Psalm). Irenaeus’ interpretation, then, is as follows: the Logos establishes the creation by bringing it into existence, and the Spirit arranges/forms that creation.

While the theology of the distinct works of the Logos and Sophia is consistent with that which he develops in *Haer.* 4 and 5, Irenaeus’ rather convoluted

¹⁰³ *Autol.* 1.7. For Greek, see above p. 164n60.

¹⁰⁴ *Epid.* 5, Behr, 43.

interpretation of Psalm 33/2:6 does not reflect the intention of the scriptural passage itself. This interpretation, then, is more evidence of Theophilus' positive and negative influence on Irenaeus. Irenaeus acquires from Theophilus the interpretation of Psalm 33/2:6 that refers to two agents in creation (prior to his reading of Theophilus, as we saw, Irenaeus used the verse twice to speak of the agency of the Logos alone).¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, having perceived that Theophilus lacks the logic making a second agent necessary (Theophilus' interpretation, closer to the intent of the verse, holds that both agents do the same general work of 'establishing'), Irenaeus imposes his own understanding of the distinction of creative works onto the Psalm through creative, if not entirely convincing, exegesis. The result is the lone scripture passage in Irenaeus' arsenal that supports the distinction of creative works of the two agents.

One of the peculiarities with Irenaeus' description of the work of the Sophia/Spirit in creation is the conspicuous lack of Genesis 1:2 in his work: "...and the Spirit of God moved over the water."¹⁰⁶ Given Irenaeus' concern to demonstrate the presence of the Spirit alongside the Logos at the creation of the world, Genesis 1:2 seems ideal for his purposes. Steenberg suggests that Irenaeus avoids Genesis 1:1–2 more generally because it demonstrates a "unitive" understanding of creation, namely, "one actor, one creator, who is God himself..."¹⁰⁷ This interpretation is possible, although it overlooks the presence of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2, which militates against a unitive reading. More likely, the influence of Theophilus is the reason why Irenaeus passes over this verse in silence. Theophilus used Genesis 1:2 to speak of an impersonal spirit, an attribute of God. Irenaeus also shows an understanding of an impersonal, life-giving breath of God distinct from the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁸ Possibly, he accepted Theophilus' interpretation of Genesis 1:2 as referring to this impersonal entity and not to the Holy Spirit. As such, this verse would not support the presence of the Third Person in creation, so Irenaeus neglects the verse in favor of Genesis 1:26 and Psalm 33/2:6.

As shown in the previous section, Irenaeus makes the most use of Genesis 1:26 in support of the Spirit's work in creation, but his uses of this verse actually represent the only times in his work (after the definitive distinction of creative

¹⁰⁵ See above pp. 166–67.

¹⁰⁶ NRSV translation. Irenaeus refers to the verse only once in the midst of explaining the Marcosian numerical system in which the Spirit is included with the water, the abyss, and the darkness as a second Tetrad parallel to the first Tetrad of God, Beginning, Heaven, and Earth named in Gen. 1.1 (*Haer.* 1.18.1).

¹⁰⁷ Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ *Haer.* 5.12.1.

works in *Haer.* 3.24.2) that Irenaeus unites the respective creative works of the two agents into one. The prime example is his statement at the outset of *Haer.* 4, “For humans are a composition of soul and flesh, who were formed according to the image of God and formed by his hands, that is by the Son and Spirit, to whom he also said, ‘Let us make man.’”¹⁰⁹ Unlike the passages quoted previously, Irenaeus does not use two separate verbs to describe the respective works, nor does he speak of a two agent creation theology whereby the Son establishes material creation and the Spirit completes it. Rather, in this passage, and others that cite Genesis 1:26, the Son and Spirit cooperate in the same work of forming humanity.

Irenaeus unites the respective creative functions of the Logos and Sophia in his interpretation of Genesis 1:26 for two reasons, both of which are attributable to Theophilus. First, their cooperation in the same creative function makes the ‘hands of God’ metaphor work within Irenaeus’ developed theology of creation. As with its function in Theophilus’ *Autol.*, from which Irenaeus acquires the metaphor,¹¹⁰ the image does not describe the right hand performing one function and the left performing another. Rather, Irenaeus, like Theophilus, understands both of God’s hands as cooperating in the same work of forming humanity. Second, the cooperation of the Son and the Spirit in the formation of humanity allows Irenaeus to emphasize humanity as special within the creation.¹¹¹ Only at the creation of humanity does God speak to the Son and the Spirit together and say, “Let us make . . .” and only in the creation of humanity do the Son and the Spirit come together to perform the same work.¹¹²

109 *Haer.* 4.Pref.4. See also, *Haer.* 5.1.3, 5.6.1, 5.28.4.

110 Irenaeus does not employ the ‘hands of God’ image in relation to the creative work of the Son and the Spirit until the later books of *Haer.* The first reference comes in *Haer.* 4.Pref.4 after he has read Theophilus. The absence of the metaphor in the early books of *Haer.* compared with the frequency with which Irenaeus uses the metaphor in the later books suggests that he acquired it from Theophilus.

111 Steenberg makes a similar point when he refers to Irenaeus’ “anthropocentric notion” of the divine economy in Irenaeus’ approach to cosmology. Humans are the crown of creation and Irenaeus uses Gen. 1:26–27 to make this point. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 74–80.

112 *Haer.* 4.20.1 combines the work of the two agents in relation to “all things,” not just the formation of humanity. This passage could be interpreted as referring to the general work of creation, in which case, it would represent the lone example (after the definitive distinction at *Haer.* 3.24.2), in which Irenaeus does not speak of two separate works of the Logos and Sophia in the creation of *all things*. However, immediately following *Haer.* 4.20.1, Irenaeus quotes Gen. 1:26, and in the same context he refers to the two agents as God’s “hands.” If Irenaeus is consistent with his normal use of the ‘hands of God’ imagery,

Although, as I have shown, Theophilus does not distinguish between the works of the two agents, he still emphasizes the special quality of the formation of humanity in the order of creation when he writes, "For after making everything else by a word, God considered all this as incidental; he regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands."¹¹³ Despite his subtle critique and change of certain aspects of Theophilus' pneumatology, Irenaeus accepts these components from Theophilus (the 'hands of God' metaphor, the special character of the creation of humanity, and the use of Genesis 1:26) without modification.

The creative work of the Holy Spirit confirms my conclusions regarding his divine status from an analysis of Irenaeus' use of Sophia language. Irenaeus includes Sophia/Spirit with God/Father and the Logos/Son in the act of creation, because like the latter two, the Sophia/Spirit is divine. As Jaschke writes, "On the one side stands the work, all of creation, on the other stands the life giving Spirit, ascribed to God, the work in contrast to the one who works, the eternal one contrary to the temporal ones. The Spirit is the creator, the eternal power of God."¹¹⁴ Moreover, Irenaeus' peculiar understanding of distinct creative works provides the logic by which the Sophia's presence in the beginning with the Logos becomes intelligible. According to Irenaeus' understanding, only with the distinct yet cooperative works of two creative agents (who both work according to the Father's will) can the creation be complete. As the next chapter will indicate, this Trinitarian scheme of creation aligns well with Irenaeus' understanding of the divine work of the economy in general.

The Holy Spirit Reveals

Before concluding this chapter, I must briefly engage a second pre-incarnational work of the Sophia/Spirit. For Irenaeus, like all of the Apologists, the Holy Spirit is the agent who spoke through the prophets regarding divine matters and in particular regarding the coming of Christ. Nevertheless, unlike the Sophia/Spirit's creative function, which Irenaeus develops in previously unparalleled directions in order to support the divine and eternal nature of the Third Person,

he has in mind in *Haer.* 4.20.1 the formation of humanity, even though he writes "all things." This intention, then, accounts for the cooperation, as opposed to distinction, of works in this context in accord with his normal interpretation of Gen. 1:26.

¹¹³ *Autol.* 2.18, Grant, 57.

¹¹⁴ Jaschke, *Heilige Geist*, 205. The inclusion of the Spirit with the Father and Son in the Creator/creature divide also is crucial to Fantino's account of the divine nature of the Spirit. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 342–44.

the Spirit's prophetic function represents a strong component of the traditional faith handed down to Irenaeus, who adds little to the teaching he received.

In *Haer.* 1, prior to his pneumatological development and expansion, Irenaeus writes, "the Church believes . . . in the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets preached the economies . . ." ¹¹⁵ Similarly, in *Epid.* 6, after his development of the person and role of the Holy Spirit as a fully divine entity alongside the Logos/Son, he reports the third article of the Christian faith as belief in "the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs learnt the things of God and the righteous were led in the path of righteousness . . ." ¹¹⁶ Despite his expansion of the Holy Spirit's function, Irenaeus never removes or diminishes the importance of this aspect of the Spirit's work. Like the Apologists, he consistently refers to the Third Person as the "prophetic Spirit." ¹¹⁷ Like Theophilus, and unlike Justin and Athenagoras, Irenaeus also expands the Spirit's revelatory role to the apostles. For example, he writes, "In truth, one and the same Spirit of God, who through the prophets foretold how and in what manner the Lord would come, and who through the elders translated well the things that had been prophesied well, preached in turn through the apostles that the fullness of the times of the adoption had come . . ." ¹¹⁸ This aspect of Irenaeus' pneumatology provides another argument for the continuity of the scriptures—as the same Logos who creates and reveals God in the theophanies became incarnate on earth, so also the same Spirit who spoke through the prophets, also spoke through the Gospel writers.

Moreover, Irenaeus believes the revelatory work of the Spirit continues in the current Christian community. As Briggman points out, Irenaeus is the first of the early Christian writers to emphasize the Lukan story of the day of Pentecost as the point in which the Holy Spirit is given to the church and specifically to the apostles. ¹¹⁹ Irenaeus writes, "For, after our Lord had risen from the dead, and [the apostles] were clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they had full assurance concerning all things, and had 'perfect knowledge.'" ¹²⁰ For later Christians, including those of his own day, Irenaeus emphasizes the importance of baptism as the conduit of the gift of the Holy Spirit. ¹²¹ A good summary statement of this comprehensive

¹¹⁵ *Haer.* 1.10.1.

¹¹⁶ *Epid.* 6, Behr, 44.

¹¹⁷ *Haer.* 3.11.8–9, 4.20.6.

¹¹⁸ *Haer.* 3.21.4, ACW 64:99. Irenaeus likely is referring to the writers of those works that would be collected as the New Testament and were beginning to be recognized as authoritative by his time. See also *Haer.* 3.7.2, 11.8, 16.1, 16.9, 24.1.

¹¹⁹ Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 46–51.

¹²⁰ *Haer.* 3.1.1, ACW 64:30. See also the references to Pentecost in *Haer.* 3.11.8, 12.1 and *Epid.* 6.

¹²¹ *Haer.* 3.17.1, *Epid.* 7.

revelatory work of the Spirit comes in the later chapters of *Haer.* 4 where Irenaeus writes, "... the Spirit of God, who from the beginning, was present to humans in all of the economies of God, and announced things future, revealed things present, and narrated things past..."¹²²

However, as important as the prophetic role is to his understanding of pneumatology, it is not clear that Irenaeus believes the Spirit performs this role by virtue of his divine nature, or at the very least, a divine nature that must be equal to that of the Father in order to perform the work.¹²³ First, Irenaeus never uses the title 'Sophia' of the Spirit in connection to the prophetic role. This omission is noteworthy since the title 'Sophia' establishes the divinity of the Spirit alongside the Logos and since Irenaeus subsequently develops it to speak of the creative function of the Spirit, a function that the Spirit certainly performs by virtue of his divine status equal to that of the Father and the Son. Second, while Irenaeus clearly affirms that the Logos performed his revealing role by virtue of his divinity and specifically through his reciprocal immanence with the Father, no parallel argument exists with the prophetic function of the Spirit. The *Epid.* provides an example of how the Logos reveals the Father because of his divinity. There, Irenaeus writes, "Therefore, the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since He who is born of God is God, and in this way, according to His being and power <and> essence, one God is demonstrated: but according to the <economy> of our salvation, there is both Father and Son; since the Father of all is invisible and inaccessible to creatures, it is necessary for those who are going to approach God to have access to the Father through the Son."¹²⁴ Irenaeus emphasizes the Son's divinity here because he desires to underscore the soteriological truth that through contact with the divine Son humans have contact with and access to the divine Father—if the Son were not divine, the Father would not be made manifest. The Spirit's absence in this potential Trinitarian text does not indicate that Irenaeus does not view the Spirit as fully divine. Rather, the absence of the Spirit here demonstrates only that the prophetic/revelatory function of the Spirit—the function that occasions an affirmation of the Son's divinity in

¹²² *Haer.* 4.33.1.

¹²³ Robinson notes that regarding the prophetic function of the Holy Spirit, Irenaeus' pneumatology resembles that of Justin, except that Irenaeus expands the revelatory role of the Spirit to the church. Robinson, *Demonstration*, 34–36. This interpretation implies that Irenaeus does not speak of the Spirit's prophetic function by drawing upon the Spirit's full divinity (for, as we have seen, Justin did not have a concept of the full divinity of the Spirit that would allow such an argument).

¹²⁴ *Epid.* 47, Behr, 71.

this context—is not performed by virtue of the Spirit’s equal divine nature. Irenaeus simply does not find in the work of prophecy an occasion to develop the Spirit’s nature or the Trinitarian nature of the act itself.

Admittedly, my argument here does not imply that prophesying must *not* be a divine act. Indeed, it is difficult to posit another justification for the Spirit’s ability to prophesy. I am merely demonstrating that prophecy/revelation for Irenaeus is not a Trinitarian act in the same manner as creation and redemption.¹²⁵ Whereas in the latter two works, all three divine entities cooperate to perform the same general work, although their individual tasks within that work vary, with the work of revelation/prophesy, Irenaeus stresses only the Son’s role as the revealer of the Father and the one who, by virtue of his divinity, brings humans into contact with the Father. Conversely, the prophetic role of the Spirit does not bring humanity into contact with the Father, but prepares humanity for the coming of the Son. For example, Irenaeus refers to the “Spirit of God, who supplies the knowledge of the truth, who has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son according to which he dwells with every generation of humans, according to the will of the Father.”¹²⁶ Elsewhere, he writes, “Thus, the Spirit demonstrates the Word, and, because of this, the prophets announced the Son of God, while the Word articulates the Spirit, and therefore it is He Himself who interprets the prophets and brings man to the Father.”¹²⁷ Nothing in the Spirit’s prophetic function in these passages requires his full and equal divinity with the Father and Son.

Far from a detriment to his pneumatology, this distinction in revelatory roles of the Son and the Spirit demonstrates a level of clarity in Irenaeus’ pneumatology unmatched in the pneumatology of the Apologists. I demonstrated previously how Justin confused the revelatory roles of the Logos and the Spirit, at times referring to the Spirit as the being who spoke through the prophets, at other times referring that duty to the Logos. Although Irenaeus likewise assigns a revelatory role to both the Logos/Son and the Spirit, he has a separate prophetic or revelatory role for each of them—the Spirit prepares the world for the Son, who in turn reveals to the world the Father. Irenaeus writes, “. . . for God is powerful in all things, even then having been seen prophetically through the Spirit, and also having been seen adoptively through the Son, but

125 For this reason, it is important to note that the redemptive role the Spirit plays in the economy is distinguished from his prophetic role of preparing for the Son. While I have addressed the Trinitarian nature of creation, I will address the Trinitarian nature of redemption in the final chapter. See below pp. 216–20.

126 *Haer.* 4.33.7.

127 *Epid.* 5, Behr, 43.

he will even be seen paternally in the Kingdom of heaven, indeed with the Spirit preparing the man in the Son of God, with the Son, moreover, leading him to the Father, and with the Father giving him imperishability in eternal life, which comes to each one from the fact that he sees God.”¹²⁸ Further explanation of these points requires an inquiry into Irenaeus’ understanding of the relationship of the three divine entities as they are expressed in the economy. This inquiry will be the subject of the final chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the respective understandings of the Apologists and Irenaeus regarding the nature of the Sophia/Spirit. I found Irenaeus, in his mature thought of *Haer.* 4 and 5 and the *Epid.*, much clearer than the Apologists regarding the status of the distinct and eternal nature of the Holy Spirit through his consistent identification of the Holy Spirit as the eternal Sophia of God. This language paralleled his Logos theology, resulting in a parallel position of the Spirit to the Son in relation to the Father—from eternity, the Spirit exists as the Sophia of God. Since the Spirit is parallel to the Logos in Irenaeus’ theology, I concluded that the Spirit possesses the same quality of divinity as the Logos and that the Sophia, as spirit, likewise exists in a reciprocally immanent relationship with the Father and the Son. By contrast, Justin and Athenagoras lacked a category by which the Holy Spirit could be equal to and distinct from the Logos, much less to the Father. Although Theophilus made the Spirit-Sophia identification prior, Irenaeus shows a consistency and explicitness in language that Theophilus lacked. He provides a theological structure by which the Spirit as Sophia tradition becomes consistent and effective.

Furthermore, I found Irenaeus to affirm the Holy Spirit as a second creative agent of God. The Spirit, in accord with the lexical sense of his title ‘Sophia,’ is the agent who completes and perfects the work established by the Logos. The Spirit performs this distinct creative work alone, and this work justifies his presence in the work of creation—without the Spirit, the work of creation is not complete. Neither Justin nor Athenagoras affirmed the work of the Spirit in creation. Theophilus did affirm the creative work of the Spirit, but he lacked the logic to sustain the presence of a second agent because, in his understanding, the Logos and the Sophia perform the same general work of creating. Once again, Irenaeus has supplied the crucial component lacking in Theophilus’ thought.

¹²⁸ *Haer.* 4.20.5.

In his conception of both the person and the work of the Holy Spirit, Irenaeus shows clear advances upon the theology of the Apologists. Furthermore, these advances likely were inspired by his reading of the Antiochene Apologist. The pneumatological advances result in a theology of the Spirit that makes the traditional belief and worship of the Sophia/Spirit alongside God/Father and the Logos/Son tenable. It also establishes a true Trinitarian theology.

God, Logos, Sophia

Two characteristics have marked the approach of the preceding chapters. First, I have studied each divine entity—Father, Son, and Spirit—largely in isolation from the other two. While the exigencies of the approach occasionally have necessitated studying one figure in relation to another (e.g., the reciprocal immanence of the Father and the Son in chapter three), the focus remained individual. I have yet to consider the relationships of all three divine entities to one another or to analyze the nature of the hierarchy that emerges when either the Apologists or Irenaeus discusses their cooperative, Triune works. Second, my study of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology largely has been concerned with the Triune God's manifestation apart from the economy.¹ As noted previously, I approached the question from this angle in order to fill a lacuna in Irenaean scholarship, which has, for the most part, neglected the immanent aspects of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. The present chapter shifts focus on both counts. First, I will be concerned with the Apologists' and Irenaeus' respective understandings of the relationship of all three divine entities, that is, the *Triune* relationship, by analyzing the passages where all three divine entities appear together. Hereafter, I will refer to these passages as Trinitarian passages. Second, because this Triune relationship is, at least in Irenaeus' treatment, largely addressed in the context of the economy, my focus mostly will be on the economic manifestation of the Trinity and, in particular, the nature of the hierarchy that emerges when Irenaeus' discusses the Triune works of the economy.

The Trinitarian passages in Apologetic theology primarily occur in contexts where the Apologists correlate Christian belief with contemporary philosophical beliefs. Accordingly, these Trinitarian passages reveal an ontological hierarchy among the three entities that posits the Son and the Spirit as ontologically

¹ Here, too, I have deviated from this method. For example, in chapters three and four, my sections addressing the creative and revelatory functions of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit respectively necessitated addressing their manifestation in the economy. Nevertheless, my goal in these sections was to discern what the divine agents' respective economic functions revealed about their natures and eternal relationships to God/Father *apart from their work in the economy*.

subordinate to the Father in the manner of the Middle Platonic hierarchy of first principles.²

Irenaeus' Trinitarian passages occur in two contexts. First, he briefly considers the inner relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit apart from the economy by expanding the arguments he made in *Haer.* 2 for the relationship of the Father and the Son to include the Spirit, as well. Second, and most prominently, Irenaeus addresses the relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit in discussing their cooperative work in the economy. Like the Apologists, Irenaeus' thought reveals a hierarchy that posits God as the source of the work of the economy and the Logos and Sophia as the agents who perform the work according to God's will. Nonetheless, I will argue that, as opposed to the ontological hierarchy of the Apologists, Irenaeus' hierarchy is functional only. By 'functional,' I refer to their respective works or functions within the economy. The hierarchy emerges insofar as God alone is the source, while the Logos and Sophia alone carry out God's will in complete obedience. Yet, this functional hierarchy differs from the Apologists' ontological hierarchy because the differences between Father, Son, and Spirit are not the result of varying levels or degrees of divinity. While the divine entities have different roles in the economy, they exist in an ontological unity from eternity, a unity upon which the economic work of Father, Son, and Spirit is predicated.³

The Apologists⁴

Justin

Justin addresses the Triune relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit in two different contexts. The first is a liturgical context that features Justin's descriptions of the Christian practices of baptism and Eucharist. The second is a philosophical

2 By 'first principles,' I mean God, the forms, and matter, all of which the Middle Platonists understand as eternal, but of varying degrees of quality. See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 45–49.

3 Unlike material covered in previous chapters, Irenaeian scholarship has covered extensively much of the material regarding the Triune nature of the divine work of the economy. The difference in my treatment of this content and the pertinent Irenaeian passages is my demonstration of the manner in which the economic manifestation of the Trinity corresponds with Irenaeus' understanding of the immanent Trinity. Past treatments omit this first step. Fantino, as I noted in the introduction, includes a discussion of the immanent Trinity only after thoroughly discussing its manifestation in the economy. My study works in the opposite direction. Barnes' treatment lacks a thorough discussion of the economic component of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology.

4 As with chapter four, I will proceed in my study of the Apologists' Trinitarian passages according to each figure's work. This structure is necessitated not by a development in their

context in which Justin explains the Christian understanding of God in order to correlate Christian and philosophical beliefs.⁵ In the Trinitarian passages occurring in a liturgical context, Justin simply lists the names of the three entities in the traditional order. For example, when he describes the Christian ritual of baptism, Justin writes, "... for they then receive washing in water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit."⁶ This order of naming the divine objects of belief has deep roots in Christian memory and likely dates back to the earliest Christian communities. Notable examples of this liturgical tradition include the Gospel of Matthew, which records this traditional formula as coming from Jesus who, after his resurrection, commands his disciples to go and "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."⁷ and the *Didache*, which commands its readers to "baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water."⁸ The only possible Trinitarian development from a passage occurring in a liturgical context comes in Justin's record of an early Eucharistic prayer. He writes, "Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit."⁹ Here, the Son and the Spirit serve as mediators to the Father, functions consistent with their individual natures, addressed in previous chapters. According to this prayer, the Father is the source of the gifts, and all thanksgiving is due to him, alone. Nevertheless, this passage, and the

respective understandings, as was the case with their pneumatologies, but by the lack of discernable patterns or themes into which their respective Trinitarian passages may be grouped.

5 I am not the first to propose a categorization of Justin's Trinitarian passages. Willy Rordorf, following an earlier schematic proposed by P. Hamann in relation to early Christian Trinitarian thought in general, claims that Justin's Trinitarian theology is rooted in four contexts: baptism, Eucharist, Christian prayer, and martyrdom literature. Rordorf, "La Trinité dans les écrits de Justin," *Aug 20* (1980): 285–97. The schematic is not a helpful classification of Justin's Trinitarian passages. First, the first three contexts do not differ in any degree that would affect interpretation of Justin's thought. Second, in order to incorporate Hamann's fourth context of martyrdom, Rordorf has to cite the story of Justin's martyrdom, which did not come from the hand of Justin and therefore ought not to be included as his own work or as an example of his thought. Finally, and most importantly for my purposes, the schematic does not account for the most crucial context in which Justin's Trinitarian passages appear, namely, the philosophical context I develop below. This context is marked by Justin's efforts to correlate Christian and philosophical beliefs to reject as unreasonable the charge of atheism (Rordorf mistakenly categorizes 1 *Apol.* 13.3 as a liturgical text and inexplicably fails to consider 1 *Apol.* 60.5–7).

6 1 *Apol.* 61.3, ACW 56:66.

7 Matt. 28:19, NRSV translation.

8 *Did.* 7, Holmes, 259.

9 1 *Apol.* 67.2, ACW 56:71.

traditional liturgical formula in general, indicates nothing of the inner relationships among the three entities. Thus, the repetition of the liturgical formula at this early date does not constitute a developed Trinitarian theology.

The Trinitarian formulas that occur in a philosophical context convey Justin's Trinitarian theology more clearly than those formulas that occur in a liturgical context. In these passages, Justin indicates that while all three divine entities are the objects of Christian belief and worship, God the Father alone is the Most High God, identified both with 'the One' of Middle Platonism and the Creator of the Jewish scriptures. The Son and the Spirit, as a result of their later generations from the will of the Father and their diminished divinity,¹⁰ are lesser divine Powers who exist alongside the Most High God. As such, in relation to the Father, the Son and Spirit exist in second and third place or position, respectively. For example, Justin writes, "Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ . . . and we will show that we worship Him rationally, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in second place [δευτέρῳ χώρῳ] and the prophetic Spirit in the third rank [τρίτῃ τάξει]."¹¹ Discerning Justin's precise meaning with use of the words χώρα and τάξις in relation to the Second and Third Persons, respectively, proves difficult. This difficulty emerges because he does not define the terms; instead, he uses them as if they were a standard aspect of traditional discourse regarding the Godhead. Scholarly interpretations of χώρα and τάξις in Justin's work range from well-developed, technical terms defining the relation between the divine entities according to the philosophical meanings of the terms,¹² to casual, imprecise terms of "Christian experience and worship rather than doctrinal definition."¹³

While there is no question that χώρα and τάξις lack the technicality of later fourth century Trinitarian terms such as οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, the decisive factor in determining Justin's meanings is the philosophical context in which the terms are located. In 1 *Apol.* 13.3, and other statements like it, Justin does not seek to describe Christian belief, relate what Christians affirm at their baptism, or express his own inner experience. In these passages, Justin specifically attempts to correlate Christian belief with accepted philosophical beliefs in order to dispel the charge of atheism. In so doing, his language attempts a definition he believed and intended to be recognizable or understandable to his readers. This approach explains his statement in 1 *Apol.* 13.4, following the

10 For a discussion of these aspects of the Son and the Spirit, see above pp. 108–11, 150–53.

11 1 *Apol.* 13.3, ACW 56:31.

12 For example, Andresen, "Justin," 190ff.

13 Barnard, ACW 56:116–117n77.

passage quoted above, that the accusation of Christian “madness” is not the belief in three related divine figures, but only the Christian insistence that this second figure is a human being. He writes, “For they charge our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, begetter of all things . . .”¹⁴ The clear implication is that Justin assumes his readers will recognize and find reasonable the concept of three, related divine figures. As such, the terms he uses to describe their relationships likely indicate truths about the divine entities approaching their technical use within Middle Platonism.

While, as noted previously, *χώρα* commonly is used by the Middle Platonists, and throughout antiquity, to refer to a literal place or space in which an entity is located, the word can also take a secondary meaning that is more metaphorical in nature; it is sometimes used to indicate the proper ‘position’ of a person or entity.¹⁵ Often, this usage reflects the status of that place or position relative to the position of another person, as in the sense of ‘rank.’ For example, the writer of the *Didask.* writes, “The aim of physics is to learn what is the nature of the universe, what sort of an animal is man, and what place [*χώρα*] he has in the world, if God exercises providence over all things, and if the gods are ranked beneath him, and what is the relation of men to gods.”¹⁶ The place of humanity here is related to its position vis-à-vis the gods.¹⁷ Justin, who is already prone to using spatial imagery metaphorically,¹⁸ likely has this metaphorical meaning of *χώρα* in mind. This usage would indicate that the Son is in second position or rank to the Father, thus indicating a lower ‘status’ of the Son. This metaphorical meaning of *χώρα* aligns with Justin’s understanding of the subordinate or lesser divinity of the Son. Moreover, this usage aligns with the adjective ‘second’—the Son is in second rank to the Father because he possesses a lesser divine nature than the Father.

This metaphorical interpretation of *χώρα* parallels *τάξις*, the word Justin uses in the same passage to refer to the position of the Spirit. The primary meaning of *τάξις* in antiquity is this same sense of ‘rank’ or ‘order’ and most often is used to refer to the proper ordering or position of people or entities. Notably, Plato uses *τάξις* several times in *Tim.* to describe the proper order that God imposes

14 1 *Apol.* 13.4, ACW 56:31.

15 Often *χώρα* is used in military contexts to describe the proper position or post of a soldier. For example, Aeschylus, *Ag.* 78, Aristophanes, *Lys.* 5.24, Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.87, 4.126.

16 *Didask.* 7.1, Dillon, 13.

17 The metaphorical usage meaning ‘rank’ in relation to something or someone else also is reflected in Plato, *Theaet.* 153e and Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.6.13.

18 See above pp. 68–69.

on the unformed matter in the act of creation. For example, he writes, “For God desired that, so far as possible, all things should be good and nothing evil; wherefore, when He took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, He brought it into order out of disorder [εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἡγάγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας]. . .”¹⁹ The writer of the *Didask.* employs this meaning of *τάξις* several times.²⁰ More to the point, the same Middle Platonic writer specifies that the *τάξις* of the universe implicitly involves a ranking of separate entities. He writes of the order of celestial entities, “The sun is the leader of them all, indicating and illuminating everything. The moon is regarded as being in second place [τάξει δευτέρῃ] as regards potency, and the rest of the planets follow each in proportion to its particular character.”²¹ Finally, like *χώρα*, *τάξις* often is used specifically in military contexts to refer to the position or rank of soldiers.²² This usage is significant for it reveals a precedent for linking and equating the terms as Justin does in the 1 *Apol.* 13.3 formula. They are equated insofar as both words are used to describe the position of the Son and the Spirit in relation to God—*χώρα* in relation to the Son and *τάξις* in relation to the Spirit.

Taken into Justin’s argument, therefore, these terms indicate an ontological difference and subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father in the same way that the various Middle Platonist systems subordinated eternal entities such as the World Soul or the Forms or Thoughts of God to the Primary God.²³

19 *Tim.* 30a, LCL 234:55. See also *Crit.* 109d, *Tim.* 71a, 83b, and *Theaet.* 153e (where it appears as a synonym with *χώρα*).

20 See *Didask.* 12.2, 13.1, 3, 29.2.

21 *Didask.* 14.6, Dillon, 24.

22 For example, Plato, *Menex.* 246b, Thucydides, *Hist.* 5.68, 7.5 and Xenophon, *Anab.* 2.1.7.

23 Dillon shows that although the entities in the Middle Platonic system of first principles varied from author to author, the second and third entities always are subordinate to the First God. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 45–49. The reason that the second and third entities necessarily were subordinated, as I suggested in chapters two and three above, is that the transcendent nature of the First God precluded his action in the material world. In Middle Platonism, this function is rather the property of the World Soul. The writer of the *Didask.*, for example, writes, “Since intellect is superior to soul, and superior to potential intellect there is actualized intellect, which cognizes everything simultaneously and eternally, and finer than this again is the cause of this and whatever it is that has an existence still prior to these, this it is that would be the primal God, being the cause of the eternal activity of the intellect of the whole heaven.” *Didask.* 10.2, Dillon, 17. In this statement, the Primal God is the cause, but the activity is attributed to the World Soul. Previous studies have noted that the ontological difference between the First God and the World Soul or Forms

The Son and the Spirit are in second and third place/rank not because they are named after him in a traditional formula, but because they are ontologically inferior to the Father and are dependent on his will in both their existence and in everything that they do.

A second Trinitarian passage located in a philosophical context confirms the subordinating sense of these terms. Justin writes, “[Plato] said that the power next to the first God was placed *Chi-wise* in the universe. And as to his speaking of a third, since he read, as we said before, that which was spoken by Moses, ‘The Spirit of God moved over the waters.’ For he gives second place [χώραν] to the Logos who is with God, who, he said, was placed *Chi-wise* in the universe, and the third to the Spirit who was said to be borne over the water, saying, ‘And the third around the third.’”²⁴ According to this statement, which like its Middle Platonic counterparts has Plato as its primary source, Justin affirms the existence of three distinct, divine beings, each deserving of worship and each existing according to its own divine category. The term χώρα (used specifically of the Logos and assumed of the Spirit) in combination with the scheme of descending numbers, indicates a difference of quality among the divine categories. Thus, for Justin, while the Logos indeed is divine, he is “another God and Lord under the Creator of all things.”²⁵ The Son rightly is called God, Justin says, but “he is distinct from God, the Creator; distinct, that is, in number, but not in mind.”²⁶ The distinction between God and Logos (and Spirit) necessarily creates the subordination. Therefore, Justin’s Trinitarian formula does not redefine the one God of the Jewish scriptures with a nuanced understanding of the divine essence.²⁷ Rather, he supplements the God of the Jews with the

in Middle Platonism influences the apologists’ understanding of the hierarchy of Father, Son, and Spirit. For example, see Andresen, “Justin,” 190, Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 346–47, Edwards, “Platonic Schooling,” 22ff, Munier, SC 507: 160n4, and Schoedel, “A Neglected Motive for Second-Century Trinitarianism,” *JTS* 31, no. 2 (1980): 356–67.

24 “... τὴν μετὰ τὸν πρῶτον θεὸν δύναμιν “κεχιάσθαι ἐν τῷ παντί” εἶπε. Καὶ τὸ εἰπεῖν αὐτὸν “τρίτον”, ἐπειδὴ, ὡς προείπομεν, “ἐπάνω τῶν ὑδάτων” ἀνέγνω ὑπὸ Μωσέως εἰρημένον “ἐπιφέρεσθαι τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα”. Δευτέραν μὲν γὰρ χώραν τῷ παρὰ θεοῦ Λόγῳ, ὃν “κεχιάσθαι ἐν τῷ παντί” ἔφη, δίδωσι, τὴν δὲ τρίτην τῷ λεχθέντι ἐπιφέρεσθαι τῷ ὕδατι πνεύματι, εἰπών· “Τὰ δὲ τρίτα περὶ τὸν τρίτον.” 1 *Apol.* 60.5–7, ACW 56:65 with minor revisions. For more information regarding this Platonic passage in its original context, see above p. 150n6.

25 *Dial.* 56.4, FC 3:84.

26 *Dial.* 56.11, FC 3:85.

27 Osborn mistakenly claims that for Justin, the Father and Son are not distinct in substance. Nevertheless, Justin’s identity of the unity of Father and Son in the passages Osborn cites in support of this statement refer not to the unity of the substance of Father and Son, but to the conformity of the will of the Father and Son. Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 32. Using

distinct Powers of the Son and Spirit who work in the world on his behalf, the precedent for which is the Middle Platonic system of first principles and the subordinating relationship of the Logos/World Soul to the Most High God.

While Justin's Trinitarian formula effectively correlates Christian and Platonist beliefs through asserting the real distinction between three divine entities, it fails to identify any mechanism for maintaining the divine unity. Rather, Justin's concern for the divine unity ceases once the Logos separates out of the Father at his generation, best displayed in a statement where he inserts other celestial beings between the three divine entities in traditional Trinitarian formulas.²⁸ In connection with Justin's strong arguments in favor of the divinity of the Son, his lack of concern for the divine unity results in a forfeiture of monotheism in any traditional sense of the word. Justin maintains the continuity with Judaism not through redefining the Godhead or in particular, what it means to say that God is one, but by maintaining belief in one Most High God, Creator of the universe, to which he adds belief in two other lesser divine beings. As he writes to Trypho, "Trypho, there will never be, nor has there ever been from eternity, any other God except him who created and formed this universe. Furthermore, we do not claim that our God is different from yours . . . We have been led to God through this crucified Christ, and we are the true spiritual Israel, and the descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham . . ." ²⁹ God the Father remains supreme because of a superior divinity and because both the other beings conform to his will, which is the source not only of their existence, but also of all their work in the economy.³⁰ This imperfect solution, thus, allows Justin to say at once that God is one and God is

many of the same passages as Osborn, Goodenough correctly shows that the unity Justin envisions is one of the Son's conforming to the will of the Father, as opposed to any unity of substance. Goodenough, *Justin Martyr*, 155. For Goodenough's full argument, see pp. 155–57. As I will show momentarily, the unity of the divine entities in the will or in the agreement of the entities better aligns with Middle Platonic unity formulas.

28 Justin writes, "But [Christians] worship and adore both Him and the Son who came from Him, and taught us these things, and the army of the other good angels, who follow Him and are made like Him, and the prophetic Spirit, giving honor [to Him] in reason and truth . . ." 1 *Apol.* 6.2, ACW 56:26. Despite claims of certain scholars, this passage does not reflect a complete lack of Trinitarian theology, but only a stronger emphasis on the distinction of the three divine entities than their unity. Moreover, the fact that the angels accompany the Son shows not that the angels are divine but that the Son is a real entity, distinct from both the Father and the Spirit.

29 *Dial.* 11.1, 5, FC 3:20–21.

30 See *Dial.* 56.11 and 75.4.

three, but it precludes an understanding that the three divine entities together constitute the one God.

Athenagoras

For Athenagoras, whose primary task is to refute the charge of atheism by correlating Christian doctrine and philosophical beliefs, the philosophical context is the only context in which his Trinitarian passages occur. As I have shown in past chapters, Athenagoras, like Justin, employs Middle Platonic terms toward this end. Nonetheless, Athenagoras' Trinitarian formula shows a deeper concern than Justin's Trinitarian formula for maintaining the unity of the divine agents with the Most High God, even after the respective generations of the Logos and Spirit out of God. This concern results in an added component to Athenagoras' formula not present in Justin's. For example, in his explanation of Christian belief, Athenagoras writes, "Who then would not be amazed if he heard of men called atheists who bring forward God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit and who proclaim both their power in their unity [τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δύναμιν] and their diversity in rank [τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν]." ³¹ Athenagoras reprises the formula later in the work, writing, "We say that there is God and the Son, his Logos, and the Holy Spirit, united according to power [κατὰ δύναμιν] yet distinguished according to rank [κατὰ τάξιν] as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, since the Son is mind, logos, and sophia of the Father and the Spirit is an effluence like light from fire." ³² In these passages, Athenagoras not only underscores the distinction of the three entities, as witnessed in Justin's use of *χώρα* and *τάξις*, he emphasizes their continuing unity. The mechanism of unity Athenagoras identifies is the three entities' possession of the same power (*δύναμις*). Athenagoras does not state explicitly the nature of this power, but it appears to be the capacity of divine action possessed by Father, Son, and Spirit that manifests itself both in creation (by the work of the Son) and in prophecy (by the work of the Spirit). In other words, insofar as the Son and the Spirit perform the divine work or power in the world, they are one with God.

This concern for the unity of the divine entities is not manifest in Justin's formula and, as such, represents an important Trinitarian development on the part of Athenagoras. Certain scholars have claimed that this formula represents an early example of developed Trinitarian thought, even equating the unity of power formula to a unity of essence or nature shared by the Father,

³¹ *Leg.* 10.5, Schoedel, 23.

³² *Leg.* 24.2, Schoedel, 59 with minor revisions.

Son, and Spirit.³³ Nevertheless, this conclusion is reached by a failure to read these Trinitarian statements in the context of Athenagoras' entire thought. On the contrary, in chapter three, I showed how Athenagoras' understanding of the Son's ability to work in the world is predicated upon his lower or lesser divinity: whereas the Father's transcendent nature precludes him from working in the world, the Son's nature allows him to act in the world on God's behalf.³⁴ As a result, the Father and Son cannot share one divine essence or the Logos would lack the ability to work in the world as well, and Athenagoras' argument for divine action in the world would break down. Concomitantly, Athenagoras' two-stage Logos theology results in a temporal beginning to the separate existence of the Logos/Son (and Spirit). Put in other terms, at the generation the essence of the Logos separates out of the essence of God, meaning that only God's essence is eternal. These aspects of Athenagoras' thought exclude a unity of essence of Father, Son, and Spirit.³⁵

Indeed, the closest Athenagoras comes to an argument of a unity of οὐσία centers only on the unity of the Father and the Son. Athenagoras writes, "Now since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son by a powerful unity of spirit [ἐνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος], the Son of God is the mind and the reason of the Father."³⁶ While Athenagoras clearly identifies the common spiritual nature of the Father and Son as the basis of their unity here, the context of the statement reveals that this binitarian formula is governed by the unity of δύναμις in his Trinitarian formula quoted previously. Just prior to this statement, Athenagoras writes, "...for in [the Son's] likeness and through him all things came into existence, which presupposes that the Father and the Son are one."³⁷ In other words, in explaining the spiritual unity of Father and Son, Athenagoras identifies the Son's *power* to act in unison with the Father as the rationale for their spiritual unity. Consequently, Athenagoras' statement that the Father and Son are united in a unity of spirit is not an argument from the oneness of nature or essence; rather, this argument depends on the more fundamental argument that the Father and Son share the same power,

33 For example, Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 101–3, Monica Giunchi, "Dynamis et taxis dans la conception trinitaire d'Athénagore," in *Les Apologues Chrétiens et la Culture Grecque*, Théologie Historique 105 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 121–34, Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 109, and Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 44.

34 See above pp. 101–2 and 111–12.

35 Schoedel has convincingly shown precedence for Athenagoras' common power argument in several Middle Platonic sources. Schoedel, "Neglected Motive," 362–65. The unity of power in these sources is not a unity of essence, but a unity of purpose.

36 *Leg.* 10.2, Schoedel, 21, 23.

37 *Leg.* 10.2, Schoedel, 21.

which, as we have seen, cannot logically equate to essence given Athenagoras' assumptions of transcendence and divine work in the world.³⁸

While locating the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit in one shared power, Athenagoras follows Justin in affirming the real distinction of the three entities. Like Justin, he locates their distinction according to their differing 'ranks' (τάξεις). This affirmation forms the second part of his Trinitarian formula—Father, Son, and Spirit are "unified according to power [κατὰ δύναμιν] yet distinguished according to rank [κατὰ τάξιν] as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit . . ."³⁹ As noted with Justin's formula, τάξις refers to 'rank' and, in accord with Athenagoras' assumptions of the respective natures of the Son and Spirit, indicates their lesser divinities in relation to the Father. According to Athenagoras' logic, by now quite familiar, the Son and the Spirit are enabled to work in the world because of lesser divine natures, which are themselves a consequence of their respective generations from the will of the Father. As a result, the differing τάξεις of the Son and Spirit are a function of their gradated divine natures, a usage that is in line with the use of τάξις both in Justin and the Middle Platonists.⁴⁰

When Athenagoras' thought on the nature of the divine work in the world and on the nature of the two stages of the Logos are considered, his Trinitarian formula of 'unity in power, diversity in rank' is closer to Justin's formula than is often assumed. As such, Athenagoras' formula features an ontological subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father and possesses the same difficulty maintaining continuity with Jewish monotheism. Athenagoras' concern for their unity following the generation of the Son and the Spirit is the only difference between the two formulas.⁴¹ The Logos and Spirit are united to the Father and to one another by their one δύναμις, but they are subordinated to

38 Crehan, who strangely fails to comment on Athenagoras' unity in power, diversity in rank formula, takes the *πνεῦμα* in *Leg.* 10.2 as a reference to the distinct Third Person and thus finds in the passage a developed Trinitarian formula that anticipates Augustine's understanding that the Holy Spirit is the bond of unity and love between Father and Son. This interpretation is questionable given Athenagoras' failure to develop this formula. In fact, this is the only example of Athenagoras' use of spirit as the unifying factor of Father and Son. Rather, Athenagoras prefers the unity in power, diversity in rank formula, perhaps because of its capabilities to affirm a distinct Holy Spirit.

39 *Leg.* 24.2.

40 Schoedel, "Neglected Motive," 360–61, 366.

41 The reason for Athenagoras' greater concern for the subsequent unity of the divine entities is unclear. Perhaps it can be explained by noting that Justin's emphasis on the identity of the pre-existent Logos with the human person of Jesus demands he maintain a persistent distinction between God and Logos (and Spirit). Athenagoras, who is not concerned with

the Father and distinguished from one another by their differing *τάξεις* which are a function of their distinct, and gradated, divine essences.

Theophilus

As shown in previous chapters, Theophilus stands apart from the other two Apologists in this study in several ways, most notably regarding the Jewish imprint of his writings. The Jewish influence also is evident in his Trinitarian formulas, which while emphasizing similar truths to those of Justin and Athenagoras, do so in a completely different medium. The formulas of Justin and Athenagoras establish the beginnings of the development of technical Trinitarian vocabulary, namely *δύναμις* and *τάξις*, which describe the relationships among the three divine entities according to the form of Middle Platonic literary sources. Conversely, the Trinitarian formulas of Theophilus come in the form of metaphorical pictures or images that describe the inner relationships of the three divine entities according to an anthropomorphic image of God rooted in the Jewish scriptures.

When Trinitarian formulas were formalized in the fourth century, they took a medium much closer to that of the first two Apologists. As such, Theophilus' images are more difficult to recognize as Trinitarian formulas. Still, his Trinitarian images are crucial to the theological development of the Trinity as they present two new elements Irenaeus will incorporate into his understanding of the Triune relationship. These elements are (1) the use of the anthropomorphic image of God creating with his hands, the Logos and Sophia, to interpret the Genesis creation narratives and (2) the preference for the alternate Trinitarian formula of God, Word (Logos), Wisdom (Sophia) as opposed to the more traditional Father, Son, Spirit formula.

Theophilus invokes the metaphor of the 'hands of God' in the context of his *Hexaemeron* in *Autol.* 2 and, in particular, in his interpretation of the Genesis 1:26 passage. He writes, "For after making everything else by a word, God considered all this as incidental; he regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands. Furthermore, God is found saying 'Let us make man after the image and likeness' as if he needed assistance; but he said 'Let us make' to none other than his own Logos and his own Sophia."⁴² Theophilus does not introduce the metaphor of the 'hands of God' to elucidate the respective natures of the Second and Third Persons. Instead, he uses the image to affirm the importance of humanity in the scheme of creation. Accordingly, he stresses

the human person of Jesus, likewise has no need to maintain the distinction between the Logos and God.

42 *Autol.* 2.18, Grant, 57.

that of all the works of creation, only humanity is created by the intimate touch of God. Furthermore, the conversation present in scripture ("Then God said, 'Let us make . . .') marks a pause in the course of the narrative that heightens the uniqueness of humanity's creation. God speaks, as he has at every other point in the creation narrative, but in this case, God's speech does not create. Rather, according to Theophilus' interpretation, God converses with his hands, the Logos and the Sophia, who subsequently form human beings.

As has been noted elsewhere, the use of the 'hands of God' metaphor to describe God's creation of human beings comes from a Jewish tradition⁴³ perhaps most clearly represented in the retelling of the Genesis creation account in 4 Esdras, which states, "O sovereign Lord, did you not speak at the beginning when you planted the earth—and that without help—and commanded the dust and it gave you Adam, a lifeless body? Yet he was the creation of your hands, and you breathed into him the breath of life, and he was made alive in your presence."⁴⁴ Elsewhere, the same work unites 'hands' language and 'image' language: "But people, who have been formed by your hands and are called your own image because they are made like you, and for whose sake you have formed

43 See, for example, Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 102. Grant refers to parallels in Rabbinic literature, notably Abot de-R. Nathan. Grant, "Theophilus of Antioch," 237–38. Numerous biblical passages, particularly the Pss., attribute creation to the hands of God, frequently using the phrase "the works of his hands." Some examples include Job 10:8–12, Pss. [LXX] 8:4–9, 18:1, 27:5, 91:5, 94:4–5, 101:26, 118:73, 137:8, and Wisd. 11:17. Similarly, another tradition describes the Lord stretching out the heavens with his hands. See, for example, Isa. 45:12 and Sir. 43:12. P. Joseph Titus reports that the word 'hand' is used in the figurative sense of God's working power in more than 300 passages in the Hebrew Bible, alone. Titus, "The Hand of God: Inquiry into the Anthropomorphic Image of God in Gen 2–3," *ITS* 45 (2008): 421–47. For a concise discussion of the biblical nature of this image, see J. Mambrino, "The deux mains de Dieu chez S. Irénée," *NRT* 79 (1957): 355–70. The difference with the imagery in the Jewish literature and Theophilus' use of the tradition, as Barnes observes with Irenaeus, is that the Hebrew Bible refers "the work of God's hands" to all aspects of creation. Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 103–4. Theophilus limits the phrase to the formation of humanity, thus employing the image to a different end. The Jewish usage reveals something about God; Theophilus' usage reveals something about humanity. *1 Clem.*'s use of the image is motivated by the same concern to highlight the priority of humanity in God's creation. Moreover, this use also represents a midrashic tradition that has reconciled the two creation accounts of Gen. 1 and 2. The writer of *1 Clem.* writes, "Above all, as the most excellent and by far the greatest work of his intelligence, with his holy and faultless hands [God] formed man as a representation of his own image. For thus spoke God: 'Let us make man in our image and likeness. And God created man; male and female he created them.'" *1 Clem.* 33:45, Holmes, 65.

44 4 Esd. 3:4–5, NRSV translation.

all things—have you also made them like the farmer's seed?"⁴⁵ These passages reveal the likely origin of the 'hands of God' image, namely the midrashic connection of the two creation accounts of Genesis 1:26 and 2:7, the first of which emphasizes the image of God in humanity created through God's command and the second of which emphasizes the dust in which humanity is created by God's hands. The writer of 4 Esdras makes the two stories a composite narrative by combining God's creative command and forming hands in the same creative act. Oddly, however, the object of the command referred to in 4 Esdras 3:4 is the dust, which dutifully gave forth Adam. Although the passage refers to God's hands in v. 5, the emphasis on the dust as obedient to the command of God makes the action of God's forming hands superfluous. Presumably, in 4 Esdras, as in the Genesis 1 account, God's speech is the creative action.

Theophilus' use of the Jewish 'hands of God' tradition in his exegesis of Genesis 1:26 resembles the usage in 4 Esdras in that he also connects the commandment of Genesis 1:26 with the forming action of God's hands in Genesis 2:7. However, in Theophilus' interpretation, the object of God's command is not the dust, but God's own hands; thus, this interpretation makes the combination of the disparate creation accounts intelligible. Theophilus can make this interpretive move because he understands the hands of God as separate and distinct creative agents able to receive and respond to God's command. By the time he uses the image in *Autol.* 2:18, Theophilus already established (*Autol.* 2:10) the existence of two distinct agents—the Logos and the Sophia—who have separated from God in their generation in order to act as agents in the creation.⁴⁶ As such, the Jewish image of the 'hands of God' in creation suited Theophilus' description of the creation of humanity perfectly. The image of the 'hands of God' allowed him to underscore the intimacy of the creation of humanity in order to elevate humans above the other aspects of creation, while at the same time maintaining God's transcendence, since the Logos and the Sophia rather than God himself, touch material.

This image represents a Trinitarian formula inasmuch as it affirms three distinct entities—namely, God and his two 'hands,' the Logos and Sophia. Theophilus affirms the distinction of the Logos and Sophia from God by their ability to receive God's command as separate dialogue subjects and by their ability to work *in* the material creation according to the will of God. He writes, "Since the Logos is God and derived his nature from God, whenever the Father of the universe wills to do so he sends him into some place where he is

45 4 Esd. 8:44, NRSV translation. See also 4 Esd. 8:7.

46 For a discussion on Theophilus' understanding of the generation of the Logos, see above pp. 112–17.

present and is heard and is seen. He is sent by God and is present in a place.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, all three distinct entities are unified in one creative act of making humanity. At this point, the formula approaches that of Athenagoras. The Athenian Apologist asserted the truth of distinction in unity of action through technical, Middle Platonic terms; the Antiochene Apologist asserts the same truth through the Jewish picture of an anthropomorphic God—God the Father is united with his ‘hands,’ the Logos and Sophia, who together as one being form humanity.

The resulting scheme establishes a triad with God at the top, in whom and from whom all divine action originates and under whom the Logos and the Sophia stand in relationship, equal to one another, although together subordinated to the Father. This formula aligns well with Theophilus’ understanding of the nature of each individual divine entity. His two-stage Logos theology presumes that God is eternal, and that the Logos and Sophia both separate from him at a point in time, thus commencing their respective separate existences in subordination to the Father.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, no distinction in time exists between the generation of the Logos and the Sophia keeping them equal to one another. Likewise, this formula also aligns well with the economic work of the Logos and Sophia. Both agents perform the same creative work, in accord with the will of God. The equality of Logos and Sophia under God distinguishes Theophilus’ Trinitarian formula from those of Justin and Athenagoras, where the Spirit is also subordinated to the Son.

I already have addressed Theophilus’ use of the titles ‘Logos’ and ‘Sophia’ and the implications of the titles for the nature of the Second and Third Persons, respectively. What remains to be said in this context is that these titles, when brought together, produce a Trinitarian formula distinct from the traditional Father, Son, Spirit formula. For example, Theophilus writes, “Similarly the three days prior to the luminaries are types of the triad [τριάς] of God and his Logos and his Sophia.”⁴⁹ This alternate Trinitarian formula displays a more intrinsic connection between all *three* entities than does the traditional formula.⁵⁰ Whereas the titles of the traditional formula emphasize the close relationship of Father and Son only, leaving ambiguous how the Spirit fits into their filial relationship, Theophilus’ formula envisions both the Second and Third Persons existing in an equally intimate relationship to the First Person, for both exist

⁴⁷ *Autol.* 2.22, Grant, 65.

⁴⁸ *Autol.* 2.10.

⁴⁹ *Autol.* 2.15, Grant, 53.

⁵⁰ By ‘intrinsic’ I mean a formula that possesses a logic in which all three entities are necessary to the common relationship.

as God's personified, intellectual qualities. As such, both Logos and Sophia are equally eternal (God could no more be devoid of his wisdom than he could be devoid of his reason), equally valued, and in equal status under God. Thus, this alternate Trinitarian formula again underscores the equality of the Second and Third Persons in hierarchical relationship to God as pictured in the 'hands of God' metaphor discussed above.

The intrinsic relationship of all three entities, heightened by the God, Logos, Sophia formula, may offer a reason for Theophilus' collective reference to them as a τριάς (*trinitas*, Trinity) in *Autol.* 2.15. Past scholars have attributed much importance to Theophilus' use of the term τριάς. For example, Johannes Quasten, representing a commonly held notion, deems Theophilus a significant figure in the development of the Trinity because he is the first figure to use this term of Father, Son, and Spirit, together.⁵¹ Even Harnack makes much of the word, specifically when assessing Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. In Harnack's estimation, Irenaeus' failure to use any word like τριάς to describe the Godhead puts the state of his Trinitarian theology in doubt.⁵² The implication of this position is that τριάς in Theophilus' thought must have a meaning approaching fourth century (if not modern) understandings of the Trinity, thus marking him as an important figure in the development of the Trinity.

Nevertheless, a word can be defined only by the theology with which it is infused; to draw significance from the word itself is to anachronistically read later uses of the term into Theophilus' use. According to my conclusions of previous chapters regarding the individual natures of God, Logos, and Sophia in Theophilus' theology, notably the absence of an eternal distinction between the Logos and Sophia on the one hand and God on the other, Theophilus likely did not intend his use of τριάς to indicate anything like a fourth century use of the term. In fact, Theophilus may have used the word to indicate nothing other than a grouping of three entities. Indeed, he follows his supposedly advanced Trinitarian statement by noting, "In the *fourth* place is man, who is in need of light—so that there might be God, Logos, Sophia, Man."⁵³ Here, the triad becomes a tetrad with no theological significance, as Robert Grant notes, "This 'triad' is not precisely the Trinity, since in Theophilus' mind man can be added to it."⁵⁴ The importance of Theophilus' Trinitarian theology lie not in the use of a certain word, but in the formulas I have raised here; that he

⁵¹ Quasten, *Patrology* 1:239.

⁵² Harnack, *History of Dogma* 2:353n556.

⁵³ *Autol.* 2.15, Grant, 53.

⁵⁴ Grant, *Theophilus*, 53n15. In a separate article, Grant makes an important, although undeveloped, statement on the same passage. He writes that "a triad which by the

chooses a word that will later acquire Trinitarian significance to describe one of the formulas is of little consequence.

The Trinitarian formulas of the Apologists, including both the technical definitions of Justin and Athenagoras and the metaphorical pictures of Theophilus, are consistent with their understandings of the respective natures of God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit. Each Apologist envisions the three entities in a subordinating, ontological hierarchy, with God the Father as the source of both the separated persons and work of the other two. Theophilus stands apart from Justin and Athenagoras in that he alone understands the Son and Spirit as equal with one another, although both are equally subordinate to God/Father. While all three authors are concerned to maintain the unity of the three distinct entities prior to the generation of the Logos, only the respective Trinitarian formulas of Athenagoras and Theophilus maintain this unity after their generations; Justin alone shows no concern for the ongoing unity of the distinct, divine entities. While these primitive formulas can be considered Trinitarian insofar as they represent an effort to maintain the distinction of the three entities as well their respective divinities, they are plagued with difficulties for Christian theology not fully perceived until the advent of developed 'Gnostic' theologies.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus' Trinitarian passages occur in two contexts corresponding to the two facets of his polemic against the various 'Gnostic' theologies. The first context, largely comprising the first two books of *Haer.*, puts forth a logical and rhetorical argument in which Irenaeus considers the nature of God as he is in himself. The second context, largely comprising *Haer.* 3–5 and *Epid.*, presents Irenaeus' exposition of the works of God in the economy, works which Irenaeus interprets as Trinitarian involving the cooperative work of God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit.⁵⁵

addition of 'man' becomes a tetrad is hardly what Irenaeus, for example, would have regarded as a Trinity—had Irenaeus used the word." Grant, "Problem of Theophilus," 188.

55 My analysis will not include the various *regula* passages. Despite their Trinitarian structure, they offer nothing substantially different from that provided by an analysis of the work of Father, Son, and Spirit in the economy. Additionally, I will not consider one notoriously difficult Trinitarian passage that occurs in *Epid.* 10: "This God, then, is glorified by His Word, who is His Son, continually, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And their power<s>, of this Word and of Wisdom, who are called

The Triune God in Himself

In *Haer.* 2, Irenaeus' description of the divine nature as spirit emphasized the truth that God is a simple being who is "wholly mind, wholly reason, and wholly active spirit and wholly light, and always exists one and the same" in contrast to the Valentinian *Pleroma* composed of numerous, spatially separated divine emanations.⁵⁶ As described in chapter three, Irenaeus understands the nature of the Logos and his relation to God through the lens of this definition of the simple, spiritual divine nature. Accordingly, the Logos, who "always coexisted with the Father," exists in a reciprocally immanent relationship with the Father.⁵⁷ As both Father and Son possess the same quality of divinity instead of the gradated divinity of the Valentinian Aeons, and as both Father and Son are spiritual in nature, they indwell/interpenetrate one another wholly such that the divine nature remains one and simple. Although Irenaeus is aware of the existence of the Holy Spirit at this point in his thought, as indicated by the Spirit's presence in the *regula* statements of *Haer.* 1, the polemic of *Haer.* 2 offers a binitarian, rather than Trinitarian, argument.

Nonetheless, following the pneumatological expansion in *Haer.* 3 and 4, where the Spirit emerges as an equal entity alongside Father and Son, Irenaeus refers back to the argument of *Haer.* 2 and retroactively includes the Spirit in the reciprocally immanent relationship of the Father and Son. He writes in the latter part of *Haer.* 4, "And that the Logos, that is the Son, was always with the

Cherubim and Seraphim, glorify God with unceasing voices, and everything, whatsoever that is in the heavenly realm, gives glory to God the Father of all." *Epid.* 10, Behr, 46. I avoid this passage without comment not because I view it as non-Trinitarian, but because the history of scholarship on the passage reveals its complexity and the difficulty with arguing from its content *for or against* the presence of developed Trinitarian theology in Irenaeus' thought. The passage has garnered much attention, particularly in relation to the apparent identification of the Son and the Spirit with the angelic figures Cherubim and Seraphim. This identification has raised the specter of angelomorphic christology and pneumatology. See, for example, Emmanuel Lanne, "Cherubim et Seraphim: Essai d'Interprétation du Chapitre x de la Démonstration de Saint Irénée," *RSR* 43 (1955): 524–35. More recently, however, Briggman has argued on the basis of the Armenian translation that the Cherubim and Seraphim are not the Son and Spirit, but they are created beings and therefore ought to be identified with the lower powers. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 194–203 and Briggman, "Re-evaluating Angelomorphism in Irenaeus: The case of *Proof* 10," *JTS* 61, no. 2 (2010) 583–95. Briggman's argument is more conclusive and better aligns with the whole of Irenaeus' thought as I have expounded in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, the difficulties surrounding this passage make a definite conclusion unwise. Thus, Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology will have to stand or fall on texts other than *Epid.* 10.

⁵⁶ *Haer.* 2.28.4.

⁵⁷ *Haer.* 2.30.9. See above pp. 142–46.

Father, we have demonstrated many times. And that also Sophia, which is the Spirit, was with him before the whole creation, as he says through Solomon . . .”⁵⁸ The reference to the divine existence prior to and apart from the creation suggests that this statement refers to the logical argument of *Haer.* 2. I already have engaged this passage in connection with the nature of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ In the following material, I will engage the passage as a Trinitarian statement in order to understand the nature of the relationships among the three entities.

First, the presence of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit with God/Father here is eternal, devoid of a time element or a reason for their separate existence alongside the Father. Irenaeus simply notes that their presence with the Father is *semper*.⁶⁰ Absent is a reference to their work in creation to justify their separate existence alongside God, as was the case with the two-stage Logos theology of the Apologists.⁶¹ Irenaeus’ mention of “creation” in *Haer.* 4.20.3 does not entail the work of creating, but the entity of creation and serves to underscore the eternality of Father, Son, and Spirit in contrast to the temporal creation. Irenaeus’ point, opposite of the Apologists’ and, to a certain degree, Valentinian thought, asserts the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit’s eternal existence with the Father regardless of the presence of creation. For Irenaeus, the existence of the Son and Spirit is necessary in the same manner that the existence of the Father is necessary.

Irenaeus’ paralleling of the respective statements on the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit coupled with the summary reference to the rhetorical argument of *Haer.* 2 suggests that he intends the fruits of his earlier rhetorical argument, which addressed the immanent relationship between Father and Son alone, to apply to the immanent relationships of all three divine entities. In other words, Irenaeus’ statement in *Haer.* 4.20.3 makes the binitarian argument of *Haer.* 2 a Trinitarian argument. Consequently, every truth affirmed of the Son’s relationship to the Father now is affirmed of the Spirit’s relationship to the Father, as well as of the mutual relationship between the Spirit and the Son. Therefore, the Trinitarian formula represented by *Haer.* 4.20.3 affirms the existence of

58 *Haer.* 4.20.3. For Latin, see above p. 172n81.

59 See above p. 174.

60 Technically, *semper* only refers to the Logos/Son, but the presence of *autem*, which introduces the second phrase about the Sophia/Spirit, parallels the two statements and indicates that the *semper* applies to both Logos and Sophia. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the quotations from Proverbs following the reference to the Spirit also support the eternal nature of the Spirit and are given precisely because the Spirit originally was not included in the rhetorical argument of *Haer.* 2.

61 In the Apologists’ understanding, the occasion of the Second and Third Person’s separation from the Father is their work in creation. For a summary of this argument, see above pp. 116–17.

three eternally divine and distinct, which is to say personal entities, independent of the roles they perform in the economy, who exist as spirit and fully interpenetrate one another.

The Trinitarian formula resulting from this retroactive alteration of the binitarian argument of *Haer. 2* is quite advanced from the ontologically subordinate hierarchy witnessed in the Apologists' formulas. Unlike his sources, Irenaeus does not rank the three divine entities in descending order, assigning them different places or categories. In fact, the argument of *Haer. 2* indicts Valentinian theology on just this count for this understanding would render the divine nature compound and therefore comprised of gradated and spatially separated divine beings. He writes, "But God being wholly Mind and wholly Logos, what he thinks he speaks and what he speaks he thinks: for his Thought is his Logos, and his Logos is his Mind, and the Mind which contains all things, is the Father himself . . . And similarly, regarding the Logos, when anyone makes him the third emission from the Father . . . he is ignorant of his greatness [for] he has separated the Logos very far from God."⁶² Rather, in Irenaeus' formula, the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit exist in a reciprocally immanent relationship with the Father and with one another, such that the same divine nature encompasses all three entities. The one divinity, or the one spiritual nature that comprises all three entities, makes Father, Son, and Spirit one.

Irenaeus' emphasis on the equality of divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit explains, in part, his reluctance to address the respective generations of the Second and Third Persons from God.⁶³ For the Apologists, the generation of the Second and Third Persons served as the basis for their lesser, subordinate divine natures insofar as their generations displayed a temporal beginning to their personal existences. Therefore, in the Apologists' understanding, only the Father was eternally personal and equated with the God of Israel. As noted earlier in this chapter, the subordinate natures of the Son and Spirit allowed the Apologists to maintain some semblance of monotheism.

As opposed to the Apologists' emphasis on the generations, Irenaeus underscores the distinction between the eternal divine nature—equally shared by Father, Son, and Spirit—and created material things, what I have been referring to as the Creator/creature divide. While this distinction is a consistent theme throughout Irenaeus' works, two passages offer particular emphasis.

⁶² *Haer. 2.28.5.*

⁶³ As noted in chapter three, Irenaeus' understanding of the generation of the Logos is implicit in his polemic against the Valentinian theory of emanation, but never directly addressed. As I showed in chapter four, Irenaeus never addresses the generation of the Holy Spirit.

I have addressed both of these passages in different contexts but I will revisit them here. The first passage comes from *Haer.* 2 and pertains to the Father and Son. Irenaeus writes, “[T]o the degree that he who today was made and began to exist as creature is inferior to him who was not made and is always the same, to that degree he is inferior to him who made him, in knowledge and for investigating the reason of all things. For you, O man, are not uncreated, nor did you always coexist with God, as his own Logos did . . .”⁶⁴ In a second passage, from *Haer.* 5, Irenaeus includes the Spirit with the Father and the Son in their distinction from created beings. He writes, “[Isaiah] classifies the Spirit [*Spiritum*] as peculiar to God, which in the last times he pours out upon the human race by the adoption of sons, but [he classifies] breath [*afflatum*] ordinarily in creation, and he makes clear it is a created work. But that which has been made is a different thing from him who makes it. The breath, therefore, is temporal, but the Spirit eternal.”⁶⁵ For Irenaeus, the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit are included in the uncreated nature of God/Father because they are eternal. While Irenaeus also believes the Son and Spirit are generated from the Father, his removal of the time element from this generation allows him to maintain the Son and Spirit’s eternal natures, an argument which anticipates the distinction between ‘uncreated’ and ‘ungenerated’ that will become central to the Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century. Therefore, Irenaeus remains a monotheist insofar as all three entities are equally God and share one divine, spiritual nature. As I have shown, Irenaeus does not have a category by which to identify the separate existence of the Son and Spirit within this same divine, spiritual nature. Nevertheless, Irenaeus believes Father, Son, and Spirit are distinguished, as indicated by the differing roles they play in the economy, but he is much more interested in their unity, such that he fails to develop a separate category approximating ‘person.’

Irenaeus understands the Son and the Spirit to share the same uncreated, divine nature with the Father, so his work shows an increasing awareness that the term ‘God’ (Θεός, *Deus*) is inadequate as a title for the Father alone, for insofar as all three entities are uncreated, all three are God. As such, Irenaeus begins to explore a redefinition of the title ‘God’ to refer not only to the Father (or to the Son or Spirit for that matter), but rather, to refer to the uncreated, divine nature that all three entities equally possess. Following the rhetorical argument of *Haer.* 2, he first expands the divine title ‘God’ to include the Son with the Father:

64 *Haer.* 2.25.3, ACW 65:83 with minor revisions.

65 *Haer.* 5.12.2. For the Latin, see above p. 174n85.

But the things that were established are distinct from Him [God] who established them; and the things that were created, from Him who created them. For He Himself is uncreated, without beginning and without end, in need of no one, self-sufficient, bestowing existence on all the rest. But the things made by Him have a beginning; and all things that have a beginning are also liable to dissolution, and are subject to, and in need of, Him who made them. So it is necessary that these things have a different appellation among those who have even a modicum of sense for distinguishing such matters, so that He who made all things, together with His Logos, is rightly called God and only Lord. . .⁶⁶

In a later statement, he includes the Spirit with the Father and Son under the title ‘God.’ He writes, “[M]an, who is a created and organized being, is made according to the image and likeness of the uncreated God, of the Father who plans and commands, of the Son who assists and accomplishes, and of the Spirit who nourishes and completes, but with the man making progress every day and ascending toward the perfect, becoming near to the uncreated One.”⁶⁷ The parallel structure of both the Latin and Greek versions, as well as the appositional structure of the Greek fragment, demonstrates that when Irenaeus refers to the uncreated God, he has in mind the Father, Son, and Spirit together. Thus, humans are being conformed daily not simply into the image of the Father, as we might see in Justin, but into the image of the uncreated One (*Deus* in the Latin translation), who is Father, Son, and Spirit.

Irenaeus’ redefinition of the title ‘God’ to refer not to the Father alone, but to the one divine nature of Father, Son, and Spirit is displayed most clearly in the juxtaposition of two alternate interpretations he provides of Ephesians 4:6. In *Haer.* 2, Irenaeus writes, “Moreover, that this God is the Father of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul said of him: ‘There is one God the Father, who is over

66 *Haer.* 3.8.3, ACW 64:44 with minor revisions.

67 “ὁ γενητὸς καὶ πεπλασμένος ἄνθρωπος κατ’ εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν γίνεται τοῦ ἀγενήτου θεοῦ, τοῦ μὲν Πατρὸς εὐδοκούντος καὶ κελεύοντος, τοῦ δὲ Υἱοῦ ὑπουργούντος καὶ πράσσοντος, τοῦ δὲ Πνεύματος τρέφοντος καὶ αὐξοντος, τοῦ δὲ ἀνθρώπου ἡμέρα προκόπτοντος καὶ ἀνερχομένου πρὸς τὸ τέλειον, πλησίον τούτέστι τοῦ ἀγενήτου γινομένου.” *Haer.* 4.38.3. The Greek fragment comes from John Damascene’s *Sacra Parallela*. See Rousseau, SC 100:56, 73–74. I have chosen to translate the Greek here, although the Greek does not differ significantly from the Latin. The two versions diverge in the final sentence, where the Greek repeats “the uncreated One” but the Latin has *Deus*. The difference illustrates the point I am making here; namely, for Irenaeus, ‘God’ means uncreated, and because Irenaeus considers the Son and Spirit uncreated along with the Father, he necessarily considers them God.

all and through all and in us all.”⁶⁸ In this interpretation, *Deus* refers to the Father alone, and the verse is significant because for Irenaeus it proves that the Creator God is the Father of Jesus Christ, thus eliminating the ‘Gnostic’ and Marcionite notion that Jesus Christ revealed a previously unknown God.⁶⁹ In *Epid.* 5, following the rhetorical argument of *Haer.* 2 and the pneumatological expansion of *Haer.* 3 and 4, Irenaeus offers a Trinitarian reading of the same passage. He writes, “Hence, His apostle Paul also well says, ‘One God, the Father, who is above all, and through all and in us all’—because ‘above all’ is the Father, and ‘through all’ is the Word—since through Him everything was made by the Father—while ‘in us all’ is the Spirit, who cries ‘Abba, Father,’ and forms man to the likeness of God.”⁷⁰ In this passage, Irenaeus argues that the Father alone no longer encapsulates the title ‘God.’ In fact, the title refers to the Father, Son, and Spirit together. Thus, while the one God is above all, through all, and in all, the Father alone is above all, the Son alone is through all, and the Spirit alone is in all. Irenaeus’ references to “above,” “through,” and “in,” thus, do not indicate an ontological subordinating hierarchy,⁷¹ for the entire formula is governed by the title “uncreated God” which Father, Son, and Spirit equally share, but rather, indicates the different functions of the three entities within

68 *Haer.* 2.2.6.

69 For the use of this passage in the context of my discussion on the Fatherhood of God, see above pp. 74–76.

70 *Epid.* 5, Behr, 43.

71 Contra Norris who claims that Irenaeus’ interpretation of the Father above all and the Logos in all is inspired by a Middle Platonist “distinction between the world-transcending supreme Mind and the immanent World Soul.” Norris, *God and World*, 87. This interpretation has several difficulties. First, the contrast that Norris perceives between the Father and Son here is foreign to Irenaeus’ thought. As I have shown elsewhere, Irenaeus everywhere equates the two entities, striving to demonstrate that they are of the same spiritual and Logos nature. Second, Norris’ interpretation runs counter to Irenaeus’ use of the verse. Irenaeus emphasizes the identity of the entities by arguing that each deserves the name ‘God,’ not their distinction, as Norris’ interpretation assumes. The Ephesians verse gives Irenaeus three different ways of referring to one God—the actual prepositions (“above,” “through,” and “in”) are secondary. Third, given Norris’ reading, Irenaeus’ motive for mentioning the Spirit disappears. If Irenaeus is inspired by the Middle Platonist distinction between the Supreme Mind and the World Soul, then he has no need to include the Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit is an intricate part of Irenaeus’ interpretation of the passage and the truth that there are three divine entities, as opposed to two according to Norris’ interpretation, is what draws him to the Ephesians passage in the first place.

the economy.⁷² What Irenaeus elsewhere writes of the distinction of Father and Son can also be applied to the Trinitarian distinctions, "Therefore, the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since He who is born of God is God, and in this way, according to His being and power <and> essence, one God is demonstrated: but according to the <economy> of our salvation, there is both Father and Son . . ."⁷³ To this cooperative, Triune work of the economy, I now turn.

The Triune God in Relation to the Economy

Irenaeus believes the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit, as eternally with God and as God themselves, cooperate with God/Father in every divine act. Two primary acts demonstrate the Trinitarian nature of the work of God in the economy, namely, creation and redemption.⁷⁴

The Trinity in Creation

As early as *Haer.* 2, where he is only concerned with the relationship of Father and Son, Irenaeus speaks of the creation of the world as a Trinitarian act. He writes, "[God] is Father, he is God, he is Founder, he is Maker, he is Creator, who made all those things by himself, that is, through His Logos and His Sophia . . ."⁷⁵ Two observations can be drawn from this passage regarding the nature of the cooperative work of the Triune God. First, God is the source of the creative

72 The same can be said for *Haer.* 5.18.2 where Irenaeus offers a similar reading of Eph. 4:6. He writes, "And thus one God the Father is revealed, who is above all, and through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and he is the head of Christ; but the Logos is through all, and he is the head of the Church; and the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water . . ." Although the *Epid.* passage is admittedly clearer on the equality of Father, Son, and Spirit, any subordinationist reading of the *Haer.* 5.18.2 passage is mitigated by Irenaeus' specific inclusion of the Logos and the Spirit in the above all, through all, and in all formula which is used to define God as a whole.

73 *Epid.* 47, Behr, 71. Fantino reads the Spirit into this verse by identifying the Spirit as one who, like the Son, is born of God. Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 380–81.

74 The Spirit does not perform his revelatory/prophetic function by virtue of an equal divinity with the Father; thus, revelation does not appear as a Trinitarian act when defined as all three divine entities cooperating to perform the same general work by virtue of their equal divinity. On the Spirit's prophetic role and its relation to his divinity, see above pp. 185–87. Thus, I will not readdress the revelatory act in this chapter. I will revisit the creative act insofar as I have yet to address Irenaeus' understanding of the cooperative work of all three entities or his primary image in addressing this Trinitarian act, namely, the image of the Son and Spirit as 'the two hands of God.'

75 "[H]ic Pater, hic Deus, hic Conditor, hic Factor, hic Fabricator, qui fecit ea per semetipsum, hoc est per Verbum et per Sapientiam suam . . ." *Haer.* 2.30.9.

work, while the Logos and Sophia are agents of the creation. In other words, the creative work originates with the Father, properly called “the Creator” in this passage, but he enacts this creative intention through (*per*) two agents named the Logos and Sophia.

The initial implication of such a scheme suggests a hierarchical subordination of the agents to the source similar to the hierarchy witnessed in the Apologists’ Trinitarian formulas. Like the Apologists’ understanding, Irenaeus believes that the Logos and Sophia do everything in obedience to God’s will. Nevertheless, a second observation from this Trinitarian passage suggests an alternate interpretation. In this passage, Irenaeus closely unites the Logos and Sophia with God, such that he can say at once that God created all things *by himself* and that he created all things *through the Logos and Sophia*. This formula, unlike that of the Apologists, implies that Irenaeus does not stress the Son and Spirit as agents, which would necessarily imply a subordinate relationship with the Father, but rather, he stresses the immediacy of God in the act of creation. The rhetoric of “by himself” is an anti-‘Gnostic,’ anti-Marcionite phrase directed against theologies that would attribute creation to a lesser, demiurgic God. Therefore, whatever the Logos and Sophia are in Irenaeus’ understanding, they cannot be a lesser or a second God.⁷⁶ Still, the variant functions of the Father, Son, and Spirit serve eternally to distinguish them. Therefore, as I have shown in previous chapters, only the Father is the source, only the Son forms/establishes, and only the Spirit completes/perfects.⁷⁷

As noted above, Irenaeus reads Theophilus’ *Autol.* at some point during his writing of *Haer.* 3. Theophilus provides him with a metaphorical image that illustrates well the Trinitarian act of creation described in *Haer.* 2, namely, the image of God creating humanity with his hands, the Son and the Spirit.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ See also *Haer.* 4.32.1.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of the distinction of the creative works of Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit, see above pp. 119–23 and 176–83.

⁷⁸ Every scholar who has described the status of the Trinity in Irenaeus has addressed Irenaeus’ use of the ‘hands of God’ motif and more often than not has deemed it the central Trinitarian image. Some of the more prominent examples include Lebreton, *Histoire* 2:579–82, Mambrino, “‘Deux Mains de Dieu,’” 355–70, Lawson, *Biblical Theology*, 122–25, Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 21–23, Fantino, *Théologie d’Irénée*, 306–9, and more recently, Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 80–84, Barnes, ‘Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,’ 101–4, and Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 104–26. Two issues normally consume treatments of the ‘hands of God’ image in Irenaeus. First emerge the questions of showing the ‘biblical nature’ of the image and, more specifically, identifying Irenaeus’ source of the Gen. 1:26 exegetical tradition that produced the image. Following Loofs’ work, the latter issue increasingly has been a question of whether that source was Theophilus or

In Irenaeus' first use of the image, he writes, "For humans are a composition of soul and flesh, who were formed according to the image of God and formed by his hands, that is by the Son and Spirit, to whom he also said, 'Let us make man.'"⁷⁹ Following this mention of the 'hands of God' image in the *Haer.* 4 preface, Irenaeus uses the image frequently and always in conjunction with a citation from Genesis 1:26.⁸⁰

a separate Jewish source. I believe Theophilus is Irenaeus' likely source for the image. Unlike Irenaeus' use of the Apologists in other contexts, however, his use of the 'hands of God' image is remarkably similar to Theophilus' employment of the image. Both utilize it for the same purpose and in connection with similar scriptures and Jewish midrashic traditions (see the discussion in relation to Theophilus' use of the image above pp. 200–203). Nonetheless, as the preceding discussion has displayed, Theophilus and Irenaeus have variant understandings of the hierarchy within the Godhead. Therefore, the difference of the significance for the hierarchy within the Trinity is not provided by the 'hands of God' image itself, but by each figure's understanding of the respective natures of the three divine entities overlaid upon the image. Put another way, for Theophilus the image supports an ontological hierarchy within the Godhead (insofar as the hands are not the source of the creative work), and for Irenaeus the image supports an eternal equality of divinity within the Godhead (insofar as the hands are themselves God). The question of whether Theophilus is Irenaeus' source, then, has no bearing upon my interpretation of the image, and I do not need to explore this question in any further detail. The second issue dominating treatments of the 'hands of God' image is ascertaining the significance of the image for the status of the Trinity in Irenaeus, primarily in terms of its economic manifestation. The image has been so central to past treatments of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology that one might assume that this metaphor, alone, encapsulates Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. This presumption is problematic because, as I have said, the image is quite flexible. This flexibility is demonstrable not only in my readings of Theophilus and Irenaeus, but also in variant scholarly interpretations of Irenaeus' use of the metaphor. For example, Hitchcock reads the image as supporting Irenaeus' view of the consubstantiality of Son and Spirit with God. Hitchcock, *Irenaeus of Lugdunum*, 109ff. Conversely, Orbe uses the image to demonstrate the mediatory (and subordinate) nature of the Son and Spirit to the transcendent Father. Orbe, "San Ireneo," 76–78. I already have shown adequately that Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology is manifest apart from his use of the 'hands of God' image, and assuming Briggman's thesis of the relationship between Theophilus and Irenaeus, it develops long before he becomes acquainted with the 'hands of God' metaphor. As such, Irenaeus' use of the 'hands of God' metaphor ought to be read through the lens of his Trinitarian theology as developed in earlier parts of his work as opposed to reading the image as the primary expression of his Trinitarian theology.

79 *Haer.* 4.Pref.4.

80 *Haer.* 4.20.1–2, 5.1.3, 5.5.1, 5.6.1, 5.28.4, *Epid.* 11. When Irenaeus does not use Gen., he speaks of the creation apart from this image, although he maintains the Trinitarian nature of the act. For example, see *Haer.* 4.38.3 and *Epid.* 5. These Trinitarian texts demonstrate that

Scholars traditionally draw out two implications from the image. First, by situating the image in the context of his polemic with 'Gnosticism,' scholars often observe that the image affirms God's active presence in the material world, as opposed to the distant, unknown God of the 'Gnostics,' the truth seen as central to Irenaeus' polemical argument of *Haer.* 2 and the Trinitarian passage of *Haer.* 2.30.9.⁸¹ A 'hands of God' passage already examined elsewhere particularly emphasizes this truth: "For God did not need [angels] to make what he himself had determined to do prior, as if he did not have his own hands. For with him always were the Logos and the Sophia, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom he freely and spontaneously made all things, to whom also he speaks, saying: 'Let us make man after our image and likeness...'"⁸² Additionally, scholars note that the image aptly describes Irenaeus' understanding of the nature of that divine, creative work as the cooperative action of a three-in-one God.⁸³ The 'hands of God' image clearly shows the Father (the person who speaks the command "Let us make..." in Genesis 1:26) as the source of the creative work and the agents who carry out this work as the Son and Spirit.

Nonetheless, secondary scholarship often ignores the effectiveness of the image for describing the functional hierarchy of the three divine entities, necessitated by the act of creation, without contradicting Irenaeus' understanding of the eternal, ontological unity of the three divine entities.⁸⁴ In relation to the individual natures of the Son and the Spirit, the creative actions of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit are predicated on the fact that they are themselves God, for Irenaeus believes that only God can create.⁸⁵ The 'hands of God' image,

Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology, even in its economic manifestation, is not limited to the 'hands of God' passages alone.

81 For example, Lawson, *Biblical Theology*, 122–25, Mambrino, "Deux Mains de Dieu," 357–60, and Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 92.

82 *Haer.* 4.20.1.

83 For example, Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 38–40 and Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 64–71.

84 Works from the second trajectory, as I categorized Irenaeian scholarship in the introduction to this work, are an exception here. The difference between my approach and those works of the second trajectory is that I have shown these elements of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology apart from the 'hands of God' image; the use of the 'hands of God' image merely confirms these insights. The *modus operandi* of works in the second trajectory is to argue these points from the 'hands of God' image itself which, because of the fluid nature of the image, is unconvincing.

85 I have addressed this supposition of Irenaeus' at several points in this work. It is manifest in both his understanding of the divide between Creator and creation, where the Son and

then, demonstrates how God's creative agents, despite their status as distinct agents, are eternally God insofar as a person's hands enact the will of the mind, while at the same time remaining along with the mind an integral part of the person himself or herself. As Steenberg has observed, "An individual's hands are dependent upon the will and being of that individual in order to function; and, conversely, all the activities of the hands can be said accurately to be directly the activities of the whole individual and not the hands alone. Whilst the three entities may remain individual or conceptually separate, there is an inherent unity among them that makes into a single, concrete being the reality they comprise."⁸⁶ Put another way, just as God, when imagined as divine nature, can never be devoid of reason or wisdom ("for God is wholly Logos, and wholly Sophia"), the Father, when imagined anthropomorphically, can never be without his hands, nor do the hands come into existence simply for the purpose of working. Thus, the work of the hands can be attributed at once to God himself and to the Son and the Spirit (as Irenaeus noted in *Haer.* 2.30.9).

The image of God working with his hands, beyond the insight it provides into the cooperative work of the Triune God, is consistent with Irenaeus' understanding of three eternally distinct divine beings interpenetrated in one divine and spiritual nature. Therefore, while the image does not exhaust Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology, the 'hands of God' passages provide a powerful witness to its developed nature.

The Trinity in Redemption

In Irenaeus' understanding, the cooperative work of the Triune God in creation continues into the divine, salvific work that occurs throughout the incarnation. This continuity is a function of his anti-Marcionite and anti-Valentinian polemic to unite the God of creation and the God of salvation, whom both groups had separated. Whereas in *Haer.* 2 Irenaeus argued for the unity of God using logic and rhetoric, in *Haer.* 3–5 and *Epid.*, Irenaeus' primary source is the scriptural narrative. Thus, in the same way that Irenaeus' model for the Trinitarian work of creation was tied to a reading of the Genesis creation narratives (particularly Genesis 1:26 and 2:7), his primary model for describing the cooperative work of the incarnation comes from a scriptural passage, namely,

the Spirit are placed with the Creator, as well as a poignant statement in *Haer.* 5 where Irenaeus writes, "The work of God, moreover, is the forming of humans." *Haer.* 5.15.2. Significantly, in the 'hands of God' metaphor, Irenaeus underscores the involvement of the Son and Spirit specifically in the forming of humanity.

86 Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 81.

the account of John's baptism of Jesus.⁸⁷ Irenaeus interprets the Gospel of Matthew's account of the baptism as follows, "For it was not then that the Christ descended into Jesus; nor is Christ one person and Jesus another. The Logos of God, who is the Savior of all and the Sovereign of heaven and earth, who is Jesus, as we have shown before, who also assumed flesh and was anointed by the Spirit [sent] from the Father, is become Jesus Christ."⁸⁸ Despite its implications for christology, and in particular the relationship between the humanity and the divinity in Christ, for which Irenaeus' account of Jesus' baptism has been studied most often, the force of the image is soteriological. Irenaeus uses the account to elucidate the way in which God saves humanity, and the description is profoundly Trinitarian.⁸⁹

87 As with the 'hands of God' image, Irenaeus' comments on the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism has been the subject of much discussion. Some of the more important studies for my purposes include, Aeby, *Missions divines*, 58–67, Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 185–223, Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 59–77, Briggman, "The Holy Spirit as the Unction of Christ in Irenaeus," *JTS* 61 (2010): 171–93, Enrique Fabbri, "El bautismo de Jesús y la Unción del Espíritu," *CyF* 12/45 (1956): 7–42, Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 378–81, Houssiau, *Christologie*, 173–86, Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 57–60, 116–23, Orbe, "El Espíritu en el bautismo de Jesús (en torno a san Ireneo)," *Greg* 76 (1995): 663–99, Orbe, 'San Ireneo Adopcionista? En torno a adv. haer. III.19,1' *Greg* 65 (1984): 5–52, Daniel A. Smith, "Irenaeus and the Baptism of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (1997): 618–42, and Daniel Vigne, *Christ au Jordain: Le baptême de Jésus dans la tradition judéo-chrétienne* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1992), 78–81.

88 *Haer.* 3.9.3, ACW 64:46. See also *Haer.* 3.12.7.

89 The interpretation of Irenaeus' understanding of Jesus' baptism as Trinitarian depends on whether Irenaeus understood the descending Spirit as the Holy Spirit or as an impersonal spirit or power of God, a question debated in scholarship. Not surprisingly, the divide occurs along the same lines as the divide over the status of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology in general, and his pneumatology in particular. For those scholars who think that Irenaeus lacks a real understanding of the Trinity (even in its economic manifestation), the entity descending upon Jesus at his baptism is an impersonal spirit of God (e.g., Fabbri, Harnack, Orbe, and Smith). On the contrary, for those scholars who perceive in Irenaeus' work the presence of a real Trinity (at least in its economic manifestation), the descending figure is the personal Holy Spirit (e.g., Aeby, Andia, Briggman, Fantino, Jaschke, McDonnell). The scholarly divide suggests that, like the 'hands of God' passages, the interpretation of the baptismal passages as Trinitarian or not depends on the Trinitarian assumptions gained from elsewhere in Irenaeus' work. In the reading of Irenaeus I have put forward, this Trinitarian image confirms the Trinitarian theology seen throughout his works. Moreover, I note Briggman's recent and convincing argument in favor of a personal Holy Spirit in this passage. Briggman, "Unction of Christ," 180–86.

First, Irenaeus uses the account of Jesus' baptism to argue for the unity of the heavenly Logos and the man Jesus as one person 'Jesus Christ,' a unity that, as I will show momentarily, accomplishes humanity's salvation. This understanding contrasts with various 'Gnostic' theologies that denied the true union of the divine with flesh, teaching instead that the human Jesus was merely a receptacle for the heavenly Christ as supported by the account of the descent of the heavenly Logos on the man Jesus at his baptism.⁹⁰ Irenaeus' identification of the descending entity as the Holy Spirit instead of the Logos discounted the primary 'Gnostic' proof text for this variant christology and thus supported his own contention that the point of union of the Logos with flesh occurred at the conception in Mary's womb. He writes, "... the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, therefore what was generated is holy and the Son of the Most High God the Father of all, who effected his incarnation and showed a new generation ..."⁹¹ Second, Irenaeus interprets the baptism as an anointing that consecrated Jesus as Messiah and empowered him in his humanity to fulfill his mission. Irenaeus is clear that Jesus is anointed in his humanity alone, for his divinity is without need of empowering.⁹² The Son's mission, moreover, entails his passing on the Spirit to the rest of the human race,⁹³ the result of which is the redemption of humanity manifested in their communion with the Triune God.

Therefore, from this account emerges a paradigm for the divine work of redemption which involves the cooperative work of three figures, namely God/Father, the source of redemptive work, and Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit who execute this work as agents. Their real distinction is evident from their different salvific functions within the economy. The Father sends the Son, the Son unites his divinity to flesh, and subsequent to his life, death, resurrection and ascension, he pours out the Spirit, who remains with humanity. Besides the effective polemical move of discounting his opponents' primary proof text, the baptism account remains the paradigm for these distinct, yet cooperative works precisely because Irenaeus finds *three* distinctions represented in the *one* image of the anointing, conveniently encapsulated by the title 'Christ.' He writes, "... for in the name of Christ will be understood he

90 For an example of Irenaeus' exposition of this theology in the Marcosian system, see *Haer.* 1.15.3.

91 *Haer.* 5.1.3.

92 *Haer.* 3.9.3. For similar interpretations, see Houssiau, *Christologie*, 175–77, 179, Fantino, *Théologie d'Irénée*, 380–81, and Briggman, "Unction of Christ," 173–80.

93 *Haer.* 3.9.3 and 5.17.2. On this point, see Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 191–92 and Vigne, *Christ au Jordan*, 79.

who anointed and he who is anointed and the unction itself with which he is anointed; and truly the Father anointed, but the Son is anointed with the Spirit who is the unction . . ."⁹⁴ In other words, only the Father anoints, only the Son is anointed, and only the Spirit is the anointing agent. The economic manifestation of God, represented in the anointing, demonstrates the distinctions within the Godhead.⁹⁵ Despite the functional distinctions necessitated in the act of anointing, Irenaeus' metaphor implies a prior unity. For although the metaphor stresses three separate components (an anointer, an anointed, and the entity with which he is anointed), they are united in one image of anointing. Indeed, Irenaeus' understanding of salvation logically necessitates a prior unity of the three divine entities that is located in their common divine and spiritual nature.

As is often underscored, Irenaeus understood humanity's redemption as accomplished through its union with God. He writes, "And if man had not been united to God, the sharing of incorruptibility would not have been able to happen."⁹⁶ According to Irenaeus, this union is accomplished through the work of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit. The Logos unites with humanity through the incarnation, and God subsequently joins with humanity through the outpouring of the Spirit after Jesus Christ ascends. Both acts are essential to the completion of humanity's redemption. Irenaeus writes, "[T]he Lord redeems us through his blood, and gives his soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and pours out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, indeed pulling God down to humans by the Spirit, and, on the other hand, bringing up man to God by His own incarnation, and firmly and truly at his coming giving us immortality by means of his communion with God . . ."⁹⁷ Nevertheless, what is often missed due to the powerful narrative that has overshadowed Irenaeus' keen Trinitarian insights is the logical truth that follows, namely, only if the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit are themselves God does this understanding of the process of redemption cohere. For the agents do not unite humanity to God by bringing them to the Father;

94 " . . . in Christi enim nomine subauditur qui unxit et ipse qui unctus est et ipsa unctio in qua unctus est; et unxit quidem Pater, unctus est vero Filius, in Spiritu qui est unctio . . ." *Haer.* 3.18.3. See also *Epid.* 47. In *Haer.* 3.6.1 the Father and Son are distinguished according to the anointing. The Spirit is not named the unction in this passage, but appears as the one who witnesses that both are God because of the anointing.

95 As with the 'hands of God' image and creation, Irenaeus is not tied always to the anointing metaphor to describe the cooperative work of redemption. Elsewhere, Irenaeus describes these distinctions without recourse to the metaphor. See *Haer.* 4.20.6.

96 *Haer.* 3.18.7.

97 *Haer.* 5.1.1.

they unite humanity to God insofar as *they themselves are God*. Irenaeus writes, “[I]n the end, the Logos of the Father and the Spirit of God, having been united with the ancient substance of Adam’s formation, produced a living and perfect man, who seizes the perfect Father, that just as in the natural we all are dead, so in the spiritual we all may be made alive.”⁹⁸ In this context, Irenaeus stresses the continuity between the Triune God who creates and the Triune God who saves by illustrating salvation with the same image and scriptural passage he used to illustrate creation. Irenaeus continues, “For at no time did Adam escape the hands of God, to whom the Father speaking said: ‘Let us make man in our image and likeness.’ And for this reason in the end, not by the will of the flesh or by the will of man but by the pleasure of the Father, his hands brought about [*perfecerunt*] a living man, that Adam might be made according to the image and likeness of God.”⁹⁹ The reprisal of the ‘hands of God’ image in the redemptive context emphasizes the point that the God who created with his hands is the God who redeems with his hands.

The implication of this logic is clear, and it works in the reverse direction of the Apologists’ logic. The Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit act as creative and salvific agents of God/Father in the economy because they uniquely share one divine and spiritual nature with him enabling the cooperative divine works. Although a hierarchy emerges in the economic manifestation of the Triune God insofar as only the Father is the source and insofar as the Son and Spirit only do what the Father wills them to do, this hierarchy is functional only. As such, it should be understood in light of an eternal and ontological unity of divinity enabling the Son and Spirit to accomplish the divine work of creation and redemption.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged the Apologists’ and Irenaeus’ respective understandings of the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit as manifested in those passages in which all three entities are discussed. My study has judged these Trinitarian relationships as consonant with the figures’ respective understandings of the individual natures of each entity, as developed in previous chapters.

The Apologists addressed the relationships of all three entities in order to correlate Christian belief with Middle Platonist belief. Accordingly, the Son and

98 *Haer.* 5.1.3.

99 *Haer.* 5.1.3.

the Spirit exist in an ontologically subordinating hierarchy to the Father in the same way that the intermediary figures of Middle Platonism are subordinate to the One or the Most High God. This subordinating hierarchy is expressed by terms such as $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ and $\tau\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$, but more importantly, the hierarchy serves as a function of their overall understanding of the Father's transcendent relation to the world. As the transcendent essence of the Father precludes him from working in the world, the lesser divinities of the Son and Spirit allow for these mediating roles. The Apologists only avoid being tri-theists by identifying the God of Israel with the Father alone.

Conversely, Irenaeus addressed the relationships of all three entities in continuation of his anti-Valentinian polemic. He displays a profound development from the Apologists insofar as he understands that Father, Son, and Spirit share one spiritual nature and consequently, the same quality of divinity. Irenaeus' transformation of the binitarian argument of *Haer.* 2 to a Trinitarian argument by his retroactive inclusion of the Spirit in the reciprocally immanent relationship of Father and Son serves as the basis for this conclusion. Accordingly, the three entities fully indwell or interpenetrate one another such that, although they are three distinct entities, only one simple divine nature remains. Furthermore, the Son and Spirit's possessing of this same divine nature with the Father qualifies them for the titles 'uncreated' and 'God,' and moreover, this possession qualifies them to be agents of God in the cooperative work of creation and redemption. In both economic works, a hierarchy manifests itself whereby the Father is the source of the work and the Son and Spirit are the agents of that work in accord with the Father's will. However, this hierarchy is not ontological, indicative of distinct and gradated divinities, but functional, indicative only of distinct works. The Son and Spirit, although subordinate to the will of the Father, are equal to him in divinity insofar as their economic work is predicated on their divine essence. They are enabled to create and to redeem humanity precisely because they possess one spiritual and divine nature with the Father and are themselves 'God.' Irenaeus, thus, remains a monotheist because he believes in only one divine nature, encompassed equally by Father, Son, and Spirit.

Conclusion

In this work, I have sought to communicate Irenaeus of Lyons' Trinitarian theology through a study of his understanding of the respective natures of God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit, as well as through a study of the relationships among them, in both their immanent and economic manifestations. In order to avoid the errors of past scholarship that with few exceptions have prevented an accurate assessment of his Trinitarian theology, I placed Irenaeus' thought in the context of the second century through a comparative methodology that connected Trinitarian themes in his thought with that of Justin, Athenagoras, and Theophilus, as well as in polemical response to Valentinian theology. According to my guiding thesis, the Apologists' theology, known to Irenaeus through the works of Justin and Theophilus, was insufficient to meet the challenge posed by Valentinianism, particularly in its variant conceptions of the divine nature, the relationship of God to other divine beings, and the relationship of God to the world—in other words, in the very areas that bear on Trinitarian theology.

The differences between the Apologists and Irenaeus stem from the logic established in the latter's rhetorical polemic of *Haer.* 2, insofar as the Valentinian conception of God that Irenaeus presents and rejects can be understood as a radicalization of the Apologists' thought. Several convergences may be identified. Both the Apologists and the Valentinians conceive of the divine nature spatially, the former metaphorically and the latter literally. Despite their differences in use of theological language, the result of the spatial imagery results in a similar understanding of transcendence (God is in some manner separated from the material world and cannot work in it) as well as a similar understanding of the generation/emanation of divine beings (they literally separate or come out of God). Both the Apologists and the Valentinians bridge the spatial gap between God and the world with lesser divine beings who consequently serve as a filter between God and the world. For the Valentinians, these beings are the 29 Aeons of the divine *Pleroma*, with the actions of the last Aeon resulting in the existence of an unintended, inherently evil material creation. For the Apologists, these beings are the Logos and the Spirit. (That the Apologists, in accord with scripture, do not think of material creation as inherently evil is of little consequence for their understanding of the respective natures of the Logos and the Spirit.) They came out of the Father at their respective generations for the express purpose of working in the world on behalf of the Father, whose transcendence precludes such action. Both the Valentinians and the Apologists understand the generation

of these lesser divine beings to involve both a spatial separation from the Most High God and a time element—prior to their generations, these beings did not exist distinct from the Father. For the Valentinians, they have no existence; for the Apologists, they can be said to exist only as the Father's indistinguishable and interior reason and wisdom. They do not do anything in this stage that would necessitate distinction or personality. Thus, once separated, the Logos and the Spirit are divine but of a different and lesser divine nature than the Father. They are eternal but not eternally distinct. They pre-exist creation but can be located and seen in it. In other words, like the Valentinian Aeons, the Logos and the Spirit in the Apologists' thought exist in relationship with the Father in an ontologically subordinated hierarchy of gradated divinities.

The Apologists' theology may be considered Trinitarian in the sense that they speak of three divine entities in accord with the tenets of the eclectic philosophy they attempt to correlate with Christian belief. Nevertheless, the Apologists do not account adequately either for the eternally distinct personalities of the three divine entities or their unity in distinction. The Apologists only maintain their unity, in the stage prior to the generation of Logos and Spirit, with a loss of their distinct personalities. Likewise, once the Apologists establish the distinctions of God and his agents by means of the generation, they forfeit any claim to the continuing unity of the three. The Apologists remain monotheists only in the sense that they identify the Father alone with the Creator God of the Jewish scriptures. The Logos and the Spirit are divine beings, but they are subordinated to the Father, who alone properly is called God. The demands of the Apologists' understanding of God's transcendence and active work in the world necessitate such a formulation.

Unlike the Apologists, Irenaeus explicitly states that correct thinking about God must be tied to the teaching of the church in scripture and as passed down from the apostles in the church's *regula fidei*. His interests lie neither in speculative theology nor in aligning Christian beliefs with philosophical doctrine. He is interested only with faithful interpretation of the church's teaching, and he found the topological theology of the 'Gnostics,' and the Valentinians in particular, incommensurate with this teaching. First, a spatially distant God could not be reconciled with the active and present God of scripture. Second, a spatially distant God, and a series of semi-divine Aeons, conflicted with the properties of spirit, which Irenaeus understands as the central description of the divine nature.

The difficulty he faced in arguing against Valentinian theology is the inadequacy of his immediate sources of the apostolic tradition to address these errant interpretations. Namely, the Apologists' interpretation of the *regula's* Father, Son, and Spirit as a distant Creator God and two intermediate, lesser

divine beings could not reject adequately and fully either the Valentinian topological understanding of the divine *Pleroma* or the corresponding theory of emanation. Consequently, without impugning the writers who had passed on key aspects of the church's teaching to him and who, in some cases, had proved their faith either through martyrdom or through possession of an apostolic office, Irenaeus departs from their conception of God. Using scripture as read through the lens of the *regula* and the logic of the traditional definition of God as spirit, Irenaeus took on the Valentinians, and as a result, he took Trinitarian theology in a new direction.

In contrast to the spatially distant God of the Valentinians (and Apologists), Irenaeus defines God's transcendence as 'absolute.' As such, God is of a higher order than his creatures, as the prophets proclaimed (Isaiah 55:8) and as Irenaeus understands the creation account in Genesis (*ex nihilo*). Only God is 'uncreated,' while every other being is defined by being created or having their source in him. Accordingly, Irenaeus understands all material creation to exist in God, who contains all things as the 'Fullness.' (Irenaeus uses 'containing' language apart from any notion of spatiality because of his guiding principle that God is spirit.) The theological upshot of this formulation of transcendence is the absence of a need for any barrier or filter separating God from his creation, as was necessitated by the Valentinians' (and Apologists') understanding. As 'absolutely' transcendent, God's nature cannot be infringed upon by material creation. He is free to move and work in creation in accord with the God to whom scripture testifies. To use Irenaeus' language, the God who creates with his hands always keeps his creation in his hands.

For Irenaeus, God's hands are the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit, two figures he finds in scripture and in the church's *regula*; for that reason, he incorporates these figures into his understanding of God and the divine work in the economy. Following scripture, and the fourth Gospel in particular, Irenaeus understands the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit's respective works in the world, both prior to, during, and following the incarnation, as mediatory in nature—they perform the work and will of God/Father who alone is the source of the work of the economy. Nevertheless, since Irenaeus does not need to keep the transcendent God physically separated from material creation, the respective natures of Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit are not required to be lesser or of a different quality than that of God/Father in order to perform this work. Instead, Irenaeus understands better than his predecessors that the agents of God's work must themselves be divine in the same way that God is divine—the agents of God's work are included with God in his 'uncreated' nature over against everything else that has their source or beginning in God.

In order to align this understanding of the relationship of God/Father and his two agents with the principle of a simple divine nature (stemming from the

properties of spirit), Irenaeus conceives of an enduring unity among the three divine entities located in one divine and spiritual nature. According to the properties of spirit, all three divine entities fully and completely indwell one another such that Irenaeus can say both that the Son is in the Father and that the Father is in the Son (and in later books, the Spirit is included in this reciprocal, interpenetrating relationship). The relational unity is eternal insofar as the eternally reasonable and wise God can never be without his Logos and his Sophia. Thus, their existence with and in the Father is maintained apart from any mediating work they may perform in the economy.

While God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit exist in an eternal unity of spirit, Irenaeus does not consider them indistinguishable. Again taking his cue from scripture, Irenaeus believes that the Father generates the Logos/Son and the Sophia/Spirit. Although he says little directly regarding the generations because of scripture's silence on the matter, his polemical argument against the Valentinian theory of emanation reveals his understanding of generation as dictated by the spiritual and eternal unity he envisions among God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit. First, he removes any time element in the process. Although Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit are generated from God/Father, this generation does not result in a beginning point to their existence. As Logos and as Spirit, they are always with God in a spiritual unity and in agreement with a simple divine nature. Second, he removes any spatial connotations in the process. Although Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit are generated from God/Father, they do not separate from him or come out of him. They remain in a spiritual and interpenetrating unity with God at all times, even when the Son is incarnate upon earth.

Irenaeus further argues for the eternal distinctions of God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit by their distinctive economic functions. In the context of the creative work, only God/Father is the source of the work, only Logos/Son establishes or brings the work into existence, and only Sophia/Spirit arranges or forms that work. In the context of the redemptive work, the Father alone sends the Son, the Son alone unites his divinity to flesh, and the Spirit alone remains with humanity after the Son's departure. Put metaphorically, the Father anoints, the Son is anointed, and the Spirit is the anointing agent. Nonetheless, these distinctive works do not depend upon the lesser divinities of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit who work in the world on behalf of a God who cannot undertake such work by virtue of his transcendence. Quite the opposite, the work of Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit in the world is based on the truth that they are divine in the same manner that the Father is divine (literally, they are 'God,' according to Irenaeus' mature interpretation of Ephesians 4:6). Accordingly, it is the nature of God to create and not to be created—both Logos and Sophia create and are not created. The Logos, who is

invisible by nature, reveals the Father in the economy such that when humanity sees the Son (prophetically and literally), they see the Father. Likewise, the work of redemption involves the uniting of divine with material, a union affected by the work of the Logos/Son and Sophia/Spirit by virtue of their divine status. The result is a functional hierarchy—God/Father is the source of the work and the two agents perform that work—that assumes a prior spiritual or ontological unity. To put this understanding in modern Trinitarian terms, for Irenaeus, the economic manifestation of the Trinity depends on the reality of an immanent Trinity, which exists from eternity regardless of the presence of creation.

Irenaeus' theology thus may be considered Trinitarian in the full sense of the word. He believes in the existence of three equally divine and eternally distinct beings, named God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit who exist as one God. He accounts for both their eternal unity through a common possession of one spiritual nature and their eternal distinction through the generation of the Son and Spirit from the Father and through their different functions in the economy. In Irenaeus' understanding, the two agents' equal divinity with the Father allows them to perform these economic functions. In contrast to the first trajectory of scholarship, this Trinitarian interpretation of Irenaeus' thought is neither anachronistic nor devoid of an immanent aspect. In contrast to the second trajectory of scholarship, this Trinitarian theology is not Nicene and indeed much more development occurs subsequent to Irenaeus to fully flesh out his understanding.

Nevertheless, it is not the case that Irenaeus has no place in the narrative of the development of the Trinity from its nascent presence in the New Testament to its full flowering in the fourth century. Rather, the lack of an accurate account of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology in both trajectories of Irenaeian scholarship to this point has precluded an appreciation of Irenaeus' role. The goal of this work was to produce an accurate account of Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology. Having accomplished this task, I will offer a few brief remarks on Irenaeus' place in the development of the Trinity as a way of concluding. What follows is intended not to be comprehensive but to serve as the opening remarks for potential future studies comparing Irenaeus' Trinitarian theology to the theologies of Trinitarian writers of later centuries.

Significantly, the areas in which Irenaeus departs from the Apologists point toward emphases in later Trinitarian thought. In particular, five areas are worth exploring. First, while Irenaeus does not utilize Father/Son language to argue for the eternity of the Son, as in the manner of Origen and Athanasius, his use of the title 'Father' to describe God in relationship to the Son prepares for this later argument. Second, while Irenaeus does not speak of an 'eternal

generation' of the Son, as the Alexandrians do, his rejection of the connotation of a temporal starting point (and the resultant 'two-stage' Logos theology) is consonant with this later understanding. Third, while Irenaeus does not describe a generation of the Spirit, as the Cappadocians will develop, his arguments for the parallel, eternal natures of the Spirit and the Logos, using 'Sophia' as a pneumatological title, affirms the logic necessary for understanding an eternally processing Spirit. Fourth, while Irenaeus does not specify that the Son is of 'one essence' (ὁμοούσιος) or of 'one power' with the Father, as the Nicenes and pro-Nicenes insist, his emphasis on the one divine and spiritual nature and mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Spirit anticipates if not fully expresses an argument of unity in essence. Fifth, while Irenaeus lacks a category (e.g., 'person') to describe the distinctions of Father, Son, and Spirit, his redefinition of 'God' to name what is shared among the three and his emphasis on their titles to express their distinct functions, encapsulates the truth of a unity in essence, distinction in persons affirmation unknown prior to Irenaeus. These areas need further explanation and development, and they are not, perhaps, exhaustive of Irenaeus' contribution.

Regardless of the areas in which Irenaeus may have influenced later Trinitarian writers, I hope that this work has revealed Irenaeus' importance and genius in shifting the course of the second century's dominant theological trends with regard to the natures and interior relationships of God/Father, Logos/Son, and Sophia/Spirit, as well as their resulting expressions in the economy. The shift was occasioned by the historical need to reject the variant doctrines of God in 'Gnosticism,' in much the same way that Irenaeus' formulation of the 'economy' was occasioned by the historical need to reject variant understandings of the relation between the Old and New Testaments in Marcionism. Irenaeus' theology of the immanent Triune God deserves as much praise, recognition, and scholarly attention as is traditionally assigned his theology of the economy of salvation.

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Index of Ancient Sources

Scripture		110/109	103
Genesis		119/118:73	201n43
1:1–2		138/137:8	201n43
1:1		Proverbs	
1:2		3:19–20	162n52, 172, 180
1:26–27		3:19	96n17, 170, 172n83
1:26		8	28n42, 172, 172n83,
			173
		8:3	57n12
		8:15	172n83
		8:21	95n12
1:27		8:22–25	172, 172n83
2:7		8:22	96, 97–98,
3			155n27
3:22		8:27–31	172, 172n83
49:8–12			
		Isaiah	
Exodus		42:5	174n85
3		43:10–11	57n10
33		44:6	57n10
33:20–22		45:12	201n43
33:20		55:8	83, 224
		57:16	174n85
Job			
9:8		Daniel	
10:8–12		7:9	99n31
38:18			
		Wisdom of Solomon	
Psalm		7:22	96n17
8:3–8/8:4–9		7:25	57n12, 155n27,
19/8:1			157, 159n35
24/3:2		9:2	96n17
28/7:5		9:9	96n17
33/2:6		11:17	65n44, 201n43
		Sirach	
45/4		1:4	96n17
45:6–7/44:7–8		24:9	96n17
65:7/64:8		33:7–9	96n17
89:9/88:10		43:12	201n43
92:4/91:5			
95/4:4–5		2 Maccabees	
102:25/101:26		7:28	65n44
104/103:24			

Matthew		4	93n4
11:27	59n18, 74, 125	4.2	56, 96n18, 155
28:19	191	6–7	52
		6	48n126, 93n4, 156
Luke		6.2	52, 60n21, 96n18,
1:31–35	100n34		154–56
1:35	100n35, 152	6.3	52, 156
18:27	84	6.4	52, 156
		7.2	154
John		7.3	153
11:–3	49, 94n8, 97, 120	8	62
11	113–14, 137n178	8.4	67
1:3	96, 122	8.7	65n43
1:14	59	9.1	153
1:18	59, 113n88,	9.2	57n10
	143	10	78, 93n4, 107n68, 156
4:24	11, 90	10.1	63, 96, 154n23, 154, 155
8:18–19	59	10.2–3	155n27
14:6–10	59	10.2	96, 101, 198, 199n38
14:9–10	144–45	10.3	65, 76n79, 93n4, 96,
			101n43, 111, 154, 155
Romans		10.4	57n12, 154, 155, 155n27,
8:15	59:19		157, 158
8:23	59:19	10.5	96n18, 101, 197
9:4 59:19		12	93n4
		12.3	101
Galatians		13.2	56–57
4:5	59:19	18	93n4
		18.2	60, 155n27
Ephesians		22.3	66
1:5 59:19		24	93n4
4:6	74, 210–11, 212n72, 225	24.2	101, 154, 155n27, 157,
			159n35, 197, 199
1 Corinthians		25.3	155
1:24	28n44, 100n35, 122n121,	30	93m4
	163	30.6	101
		36	51m144
1 Clement			
33:45	201n43	Clement of Alexandria	
4 Esdras		Stromata	
3:4–5	201, 202	6.39	69n60
8:7	202n45		
8:44	201–2	Didache	
		7	191
Athenagoras			
		Didaskilikos	
Plea for the Christians		8–10	96n16
1	48	8.2	64–65
2.1	51m141	10.2	194n23

Clement of Alexandria		1.1.3	80
		1.2.1	34, 80
<i>Didaskilikos (cont.)</i>		1.2.2, 4	35
10.3	58n15, 99	1.2.2	35
10.3–4	63	1.2.3	35
10.7	63, 87n126	1.2.4	35
12.2	64–65, 194n20	1.2.5	35n73
13.1	194n20	1.2.6	119
13.3	67n48, 194n20	1.3.3	120
14.6	194	1.3.5	120
29.2	194n20	1.4.1	35
		1.4.2	35
Eusebius		1.4.5	119n106
		1.5.1	71
<i>Church History</i>		1.5.4–5	40n88
4.18	46n115	1.8.1	2, 42
4.18.19	24n30	1.10.1	89n134, 165, 184
4.20, 24	48n129	1.11.1	120, 120n115
4.24.1	50n137	1.11.3–4	120
5.1.1–5.3.3	19n4	1.11.4	40n88
5.1.3	21	1.12.1	120
5.3.4	19	1.12.4	120
5.4.1	18	1.13.6	120
5.20.2	20n8	1.13.7	31
5.20.5–7	19	1.14.5	120
6.6	46	1.15.2	120
24.11–17	20	1.15.3	218
5.26.1	20n8	1.15.5	87n127, 89
		1.16.3	87n127, 120
<i>The Preparation for the Gospel</i>		1.18.1	120, 181n106
15.6	98n29	1.21.2	120
		1.21.3	120
Hermas, Shepherd		1.21.4	120
Mandate 1.1	65n44, 69n60	1.22.1	28n41, 74–75, 119, 120, 165, 166, 167n, 168, 169
Ignatius of Antioch		1.23.2	31n52
		1.23.3	120
<i>Magnesians</i>		1.24.1	170n75
8.2	94n8	1.24.4	120
		1.27.2	37
Irenaeus		1.28.1	23n20
		1.29.1	31
<i>Against Heresies</i>		1.30.6	170n75
1.Pref.1	41	1.31.4	43
1.Pref.2	21n16, 30, 41–42, 43	2.1.1	89
1.1.1–2	118–19	2.1.2	71, 89
1.1.1–3	86n124, 120n115	2.1.3–4	71n66
1.1.1	32, 33, 34, 79n91, 79–80, 96n16, 131–32	2.1.3–5	86
		2.1.3	72

2.1.4	33, 80, 131	3.4.2	169
2.2.1	72	3.5.1	73n70
2.2.4	119, 121	3.6.1-2	75n76
2.2.5	120, 122	3.6.1	219n94
2.2.6	74, 210-11	3.6.2	143
2.3.1-2	72	3.7.2	184n118
2.3.1	89	3.8.3	28n42, 120, 122n123, 138-39, 147, 166, 167n, 169, 210
2.3.2	40n88	3.9.2	23n25
2.4.1	40n88, 72	3.9.3	165n62, 217, 218
2.5.3	40n88	3.10.2	147
2.6.1	40n88, 76, 89	3.10.4	165n62
2.6.3	82n105	3.11.1-2	169
2.9.1	73	3.11.1	119
2.10.4	84, 121n117	3.11.5-6	143
2.11.1	120-21	3.11.5	124
2.12.1	80-81	3.11.7	37n80
2.12.6	40n88	3.11.8-9	184
2.13.3-4	82	3.11.8	125, 137n178, 184n118, n120
2.13.3	83, 87, 133	3.11.9	37n80
2.13.5	40n88, 86, 89, 133-34, 135	3.12.1	184n120
2.13.7	90	3.12.7	217n88
2.13.8	87, 132, 134	3.13.2	144-45, 145n203
2.13.9	134	3.14.4	37n80
2.14	40	3.16.1	120, 184n118
2.14.1	78	3.16.3	75n76
2.14.2	39	3.16.6	130n151
2.14.3-4	39n85, 77	3.16.9	184n118
2.17.2-8	131n153	3.17.1-4	165n62
2.17.3	142	3.17.1	184
2.17.4	136-37, 145	3.18.1	138
2.20.1	120	3.18.3	218-19
2.25.1-2	168, 178n97	3.18.7	75n76, 219
2.25.1	168n70	3.19.1	75
2.25.3	138, 209	3.20.2	75n76
2.28.2-3	4, 78	3.21.4	75n76, 184
2.28.3	75n76, 76	3.22.1-3.24.1	167
2.28.4-5	87n127	3.22.4	167
2.28.4	133, 206	3.23.2	170n75
2.28.5	133-34, 208	3.23.5	85
2.28.6	130	3.23.6	86n122
2.28.7	78, 84n111, 84	3.24.2	119, 169, 170, 176, 178, 179, 180, 182, 182n112, 184n118
2.30.2	168	3.25.1	76n83, 77
2.30.9	84n111, 89, 121n117, 122n124, 137, 139n184, 167, 168, 169, 170, 173, 178, 179, 206, 212, 215, 216	3.25.5	39n85, 77
3.1.1	81, 184	3.29.2	130n151
3.3.3	22	4.Pref.4	75n76, 170n75, 182, 182n110, 214
3.3.4	19n3, 30	4.1.1	75n76

Irenaeus*Against Heresies (cont.)*

4.3.1	89
4.4.2	124
4.4.7	125n140
4.5.2–5	125n140
4.6.2	22n19, 24, 25
4.6.3	123–24
4.6.6	124, 144n200
4.6.7	74, 124, 124–25
4.7.2	125n137
4.7.4	75–76, 122n124, 171, 177n93
4.9.1	125n140
4.10.1	127n145, 127
4.10.2	118
4.11.2	76, 85, 87n127, 147
4.14.1	137
4.16.5	75n76
4.19.2	86
4.20.1–2	89, 214
4.20.1	28n41, 81, 121, 122n124, 170n75, 171, 174, 177n93, 182nn12, 215
4.20.2	179
4.20.3	172, 172n81, 173, 174, 175, 206–7
4.20.4	126, 179
4.20.5	76n81, 126, 144n200, 186–87
4.20.6	184, 219n95
4.20.7	125n134
4.20.9	125n140, 127
4.20.10	126
4.20.11	124
4.24.1	122
4.24.2	130
4.31.2	177
4.32.1	213n76
4.33.1	185
4.33.7	186
4.34.1	126, 129
4.36.2	75n76
4.38.3	121nn17, 179, 210, 214n80
5.1.1	219
5.1.2	128
5.1.3	86, 170n75, 182n109, 214, 218, 220
5.5.1	214
5.6.1	182n109, 214
5.12.1	181

5.12.2	75n76, 173–74, 209
5.15.2	72n69, 215n85
5.15.4	170n75
5.16.2	130n151
5.17.2	218n93
5.18.2	212n72
5.18.3	119, 130n151
5.24.1	172n83
5.27.2	22n19
5.28.4	122n124, 181n109, 214
5.32.2	75n76

Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

1	43
5	28n42, 120, 166, 180, 186, 211, 214n80
6	78–79, 123, 184, 184n120
7	176, 184
8	75n76, n77
10	171, 205n55
11	81, 214
12	85
14	85
43	120, 125n136, 127n145, 138, 141
44–46	25, 125n140
45	25n33, 125
47	146–47, 185, 212, 219n94
55	170n75
57	23
72	147

Justin*First Apology*

4.1–3	51n41
5	51n43, 104n59
6	151nn
6.1–2	55n3
6.2	196n28
8.2	61
10.2	65
10.6	51
12	151nn
12.9	60, 61
12.10	152
13	151nn
13.1, 3	150
13.1	55, 55n3
13.3	106n66, 191n5, 192, 194

13.4	193	10.6	60n21, 61
14	100–101	10.8	100
23.2	99–100	12	45
26	36n78	13	105n62
26.5	61	13.3, 6	104
31	151n11	13.4	100n37
32–33	100		
32	23, 100	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	
33	151n11	1.3	45
33.6	100, 152	2	44
33.9	152	2.1	45
35	151n11	5.4	65n43
36.2	61	7.1	45
38–42	151n11	7.3	61
40	100	9.3	45n110
40.7	61	11	55n2
44	104n59	11.1, 5	196
44.1	61	16.3	45n110
46	100, 104n59	19–20	55n2
46.5	61	25	151n11
47–48	151n11	28	151n11
51	151n11	29.1	44
53	151n11	32	151n11
54.5	95n12	34	151n11
59	65, 151n11	36.2	103
59.2–5	95	38	151n11
60	57n11, 100, 151n11	40	55n2
60.5–7	150, 151n10, 191n5, 195	40.2	45n110
61.3	55n3, 61, 191	43	151n11
61.10	61, 150	43.1	61n28
61.13	151	48–62	102
63	102, 151n11	48	103
63.11	61	48.3	61n28
63.14–15	60	49	151n11
64.5	95n12, 95	49.1	103
65.3	55n3	49.8	101n41
67.2	55n3, 151, 191	50.1	103n54
		52	151n11
<i>Second Apology</i>		55	103n53
2	51	56	151n11
3	46	56.1	61, 67
6	107n68	56.4	195
6.1–2	62	56.11	195, 196n30
6.3	95, 107n69, 109	58.10–11	25n33
8	105n62	60.2	61, 67n50, 103, 129
8.1	104	60.3	61n28
10	45, 51n143	61–64	107n68
10.1	104–105	61	151n11

Justin*Dialogue with Trypho (cont.)*

61.1	28n44, 61n28, 95n14, 100, 104, 107n69, 109, 110n78
61.2	110
61.3	28n44, 61n28, 95n12, 100
62.4	95, 100n36, 107n69, 109
63.1	61n28
64.7	67n48
67.6	61
73–74	151n11
75.4	61n28, 196n30
76.1	61n28, 107n69, 110, 71
76.7	61n28
78	151n11
84.2	95n12
85.1	61n28
86	25n33
88.4	61n28
91	151n11
98.2	61n28
100.4	107n69, 110n78
102.2	60
102.5	61n28
103.3	60
105.1	107n69
114	151n11
115.4	60
120.6	44n101
124	151n11
127.1–2	103
127.2	67, 68, 106
127.4	110n78
128.2–4	110
128.3–4	106
128.4	107n69, 110n78

Plato*Critias*

109d	194n19
------	--------

Menexenus

246b	194n22
------	--------

Parmenides

137	87n126
-----	--------

Theaetetus

153b	194n19
------	--------

Timaeus

28b	96
28c	57–58, 76n79, 77–78
29c	77
30a	194
37c	58n13
41a	58n13
71a	194n19
83b	194n19

Philo*Allegorical Interpretations*

1.43	98n26
------	-------

On Dreams

1.231–36	102n52
2.46	101n43

Sextus Empiricus*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*

3.124	67n48
-------	-------

Tertullian*The Prescription Against the Heretics*

30	36n77
----	-------

Theophilus*To Autolycus*

1.3	88, 97, 102
1.4	56, 60, 64
1.5	68, 163
1.6	163n56
1.7	28n42, 56, 97, 159, 162, 163, 163–64, 167, 180
1.12	93n4, 163
1.13	163n56
1.14	48
2.3	68
2.4	60n21, 66, 72, 76n79
2.9	159, 161n46, 163
2.10	29, 64, 97, 97–98, 101–102, 107n68, n69,

	112, 114, 143, 160, 161,		107n68, n69, 113, 114,
	162, 172, 202, 203		115, 137, 143, 161n47,
2.13	97, 163		162–63, 202–3
2.15	203, 204	2.24	49n132
2.17	29, 98n27	2.30	160
2.18	28n41, 91, 114, 115, 160,	2.33	161
	162, 170–71, 183, 200,	2.35	160
	202	3.12	160–61, 161n47
2.22	26, 29n46, 49, 93n4, 97,	3.27	27n38
	100n35, 101–102,	3.27–28	48

Index of Names and Subjects

- Adam (and Eve) 26, 29, 85–86, 102, 113, 115,
127, 137, 163, 167, 170n75, 201–2, 220
- Adoption 58, 59, 59n20, 61n29, 73n71, 75,
173, 184, 209
- Alexander (Bishop of Alexandria) 110n78
see also Nicaea / Nicene controversy
- Analogy / metaphor 33, 83n108, 110, 131–35,
137, 140–42, 145, 158, 200–204, 213–16,
218–19 *see also* hands of God; theological
language
- Antoninus Pius 22, 46, 50
- Apologetics / Apologetic theology 1, 7–8,
13, 38, 50, 52–53, 91, 92–93, 101n42, 107–8,
121–23, 125, 130, 147–48, 149, 183–84, 187–88,
205, 213, 220, 222 *see also* Athenagoras of
Athens; Justin Martyr; Tatian; Theophilus
of Antioch
- Archē* 29, 64, 95–96, 97–98, 100n36, 120,
137–38
- Aristotle 52n147, 156
- Athanasius 110n78, 227 *see also* Nicaea /
Nicene controversy
- Athenagoras of Athens 45, 46–48, 55–57,
60, 63, 65–66, 67–69, 76n79, 93n4,
96–97, 101, 102n51, 107n68, n69, 111–12,
153–58, 158n35, 160, 173, 177, 184, 187,
197–200, 203, 205 *see also* apologists /
apologetic theology; creation / Creator, in
Athenagoras; Father, in Athenagoras; God,
in Apologetic theology; Holy Spirit, in
Athenagoras; Logos, in Athenagoras; Son,
in Athenagoras; Sophia, in Athenagoras
and Justin
- Augustine 25, 199n38
- Baptism 150–51, 176, 184–85, 190–91, 192, 216
- Binitarian 144n198, 152, 198, 206–8, 221
- Christ / Messiah 27n38, 93n4, 103, 183,
217–19, *see also* Jesus, human; Son;
Valentinianism, Christ
- Church / Christian community 23, 31, 41, 44,
53, 150–53, 158, 161, 165, 184, 191, 191n5
- Clement of Alexandria 46
- Clement of Rome 21n16
- Commodus 46–48, 50, 60
- Creation / Creator
In Athenagoras 55–57, 63, 65–66, 91,
96–97, 101, 148, 154–56
In Justin 55, 65, 91, 95–96, 100, 148, 162
In Irenaeus 10, 44, 71–72, 81, 83, 84, 87,
91, 117n98, 118–20, 122–23, 138, 139–40,
166–67, 168–69, 176–83, 190, 207,
212–16, 224
In Middle Platonism 64–65, 98–99
In Theophilus 49, 56, 64–66, 84, 91,
97–98, 148, 139, 161–62, 163, 200–203
In Valentinianism 34–36, 83, 119, 178, 222
See also mediation / mediator;
Valentinianism, theory of emanation/
emission
- Death 86n122, 167 *see also* sin
- Demiurge
In Marcionism 37, 70, 213
In Valentinianism 36, 70, 72, 82n105, 119,
120, 213
See also creation / Creator, in
Valentinianism
- Didache* 191
- Docetism 128, 128n148
- Economy 6, 9, 42, 42n93, 55, 81, 91–92, 118,
125, 130, 139n184, 146n207, 151, 153, 154,
158, 164, 165, 166, 176, 182n111, 183, 185, 187,
189–90, 196, 205, 212–20, 224, 227
- Edict of Trajan 51
- Eleutherus (Bishop of Rome) 18–19
- Energy / *energeia* 98–99, 101–2, 157
see also power
- Epiphanius 32, 165n63
- Essence / nature / substance, divine 90,
99n30, 132–35, 140, 147, 192, 195–96, 197–98,
208, 216, 221 *see also* spirit, as a name for
the divine essence
- Eternality, divine 63, 136–40, 143, 148, 174,
203, 207, 225 *see also* God
- Eucharist 151, 190–91
- Eusebius of Caesarea 18–20, 24–25, 46–47,
48, 50, 98, 146n208

Father

- In Athenagoras 60, 76n79, 91, 101, 198
- In Justin 60–62, 77, 91, 191–92
- In Irenaeus
 - Relation to creation 54, 73, 75
 - Relation to the Logos/Son 11, 25, 54, 73–75, 91, 92n1, 124, 137, 140n185, 142–47, 209–12, 221, 226
 - Relation to the Sophia/Spirit 173–76, 206–12, 221
- In philosophy 57, 58n13, 76
- In scripture 58n13, 58–59, 59n20, 62, 74, 124–25, 210–12
- In Theophilus 60, 76n79, 91
- In Valentinianism 32–34, 35n73, 120
- See also* God

Fullness

- In Irenaeus 33n64, 71n63, 71–72, 74–75, 80, 85–86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 118, 122, 135, 143, 224
- In Valentinianism *see* Valentinianism, *Pleroma*

God

- In Apologetic Theology 55–70, 192–96, 197–200, 200–205, 222
- In Irenaeus 70–90, 132–33, 165–67, 168–69, 205–20
- see also* creation / Creator; Father; essence / nature / substance, divine

Gnosticism *see* Valentinianism

Gregory of Nyssa 101n42, 144n197, 227

Hadrian 46

Hands of God 28, 81, 86, 98n27, 122n124, 171, 182, 182n110, 1112, 200–203, 212n74, 213–16, 220, 224

Hermas 21n16, 65n44, 69n60

Holy Spirit

- In Athenagoras 101, 153–58, 160, 197–200
- In Justin 150–53, 160, 166, 176, 186, 193–97
- In Irenaeus 164–87, 206, 217–20, 221
- In scripture 100n34, 152
- In Theophilus 158–64
- In Valentinianism 35n73
- See also* Sophia

Homousios 146, 226

Humanity 121, 128n148, 182–83, 200–202, 210, 214 *see also* image of God; Irenaeus, Creator / creature divide

Ignatius of Antioch 94n8

Image of God 9, 121, 128n148, 162, 170–71, 177n93, 201n43, 201–2, 210, 214, 220

Incarnation 49, 75, 81, 91–92, 103, 104–5, 106n66, 116n96, 118, 123–24, 126–30, 143, 144n200, 158, 170n75, 183, 193, 216–20 *see also* Jesus, human

Irenaeus of Lyons

Creator/creature divide 85, 87n127, 123, 129, 138–39, 147, 173–74, 175, 176–77, 183, 208–12, 215n85

Development of thought 15n26, 164n61, 166–67, 173–76, 206–12

Hermeneutical method 1–2, 6, 43–44, 53, 78, 86, 118–19, 130, 148, 223–24

Letter to Florinus 19

Letter to Victor 20

Quatrodecimen controversy 20

Relationship to Justin 23–26, 38, 45, 78, 125–28

Relationship to Theophilus, 26–29, 38, 166–72, 173, 174, 176, 177, 179, 180–83, 187, 205n54, 213

Trinitarian Theology in past scholarship 3–6, 9–12, 12n19, 73n71, 76–78, 79n92, 82n105, 92n1, 117–18, 129n149, 131n155, 136n173, 140–42, 142n190, 145, 146n208, 164n61, 177–79, 189, 190n3, 210n55, 213n78, 215–16, 216n89, 222

see also creation / Creator, in Irenaeus; Father, in Irenaeus; Holy Spirit, in Irenaeus; God, in Irenaeus; Logos, in Irenaeus; Son, in Irenaeus; Sophia, in Irenaeus

Jerome 46, 50n137

Jesus, human 51–52, 55, 59, 74–75, 88n131, 91, 93n4, 93–94, 101, 104–5, 110, 116, 126–130, 150–51, 165, 191–92, 193, 199n41, 211, 217n87, 217–20 *see also* Christ; incarnation

Jewish Christianity 49, 50, 69, 69n60, 158, 159, 168 *see also* Jewish theology (Second Temple) / Jews / Judaism

Jewish theology (Second Temple) / Jews / Judaism 55n2, 56, 58n13, 59n20, 65n44, 75–76, 88, 94, 96–98, 99n31, 103, 158, 158n30, 161, 168, 168n69, 172–73, 178, 196, 200–201, 213n78, *see also* Jewish Christianity; Septuagint

- John / fourth Gospel 11, 49, 58–59, 59n20, 90, 93n4, 94n8, 96, 97, 107n69, 113n88, 113–14, 119, 120, 122, 147, 159, 161n47, 224
- Josephus 49n133
- Justin Martyr 8, 22–26, 44–46, 55, 60–62, 65, 67–69, 77, 78, 95–97, 99–101, 101n45, 102–106, 107n68n, n69, 108–111, 116, 117n98, 119, 125, 127, 129, 135n171, 150–53, 160–61, 162, 163, 166, 171, 173, 176, 177, 184, 185n123, 186, 187, 190–97, 199, 205, 210 *see also* apologists / apologetic theology; creation / Creator, in Justin; Father, in Justin; God, in Apologetic theology; Holy Spirit, in Justin; Logos, in Justin; Son, in Justin; Sophia, in Athenagoras and Justin
- Lactantius 108n71
- Logos
- In Athenagoras 52, 63, 91, 92–93, 93n4, 96–97, 101, 111–12, 154, 155n27, 156, 156n28, 157, 159n35, 208, 222–23
- In Justin 91, 93n4, 95–97, 99–101, 102–104, 135, 171, 173, 195, 223
- Spermatikos Logos* 104–106, 127, 154n22
- Generation 108–111, 196, 208, 222–23
- Prophecy 151–52, 186
- In Irenaeus 92–93, 117–19
- As descriptive of the divine nature 87, 133–34, 142, 146, 147, 148
- Creative function 28, 119–23, 166–67, 168–71, 176, 179–80, 190, 212–16, 225
- Generation 130–47, 148, 175, 208, 225–26
- Relation to God/Father 91, 124, 137, 138–40, 142–47, 148, 164, 190, 206
- Relation to Sophia/Spirit 171–76
- Redemptive function 144–45, 216–220, 225
- Revelatory function 25, 123–130, 139n184, 142–45, 185, 226
- Spermatikos Logos* 127
- In philosophy 92n1, 93–95, 98
- In scripture 59, 125n136
- In Theophilus 49, 52, 91, 93n4, 97–98, 101–102, 112–16, 135, 143, 159–60, 161, 162–63, 200–205, 208, 222–23
- In Valentinianism 118–19, 135–36
- Two-stage Logos theology 107–17, 134n166, 135–36, 142, 143, 148, 150n3, 158, 203, 207
- See also* Son; incarnation
- Marcion / Marcionism 19, 22, 27, 36–38, 39n85, 50, 70, 77–78, 127, 129n149, 211, 213, 216, 227
- Marcus Aurelius 18n1, 27n38, 46–48, 50, 60
- Mary 100n34, 110n78, 124–25, 218 *see also* incarnation
- Martyrdom of Justin* 22, 45, 46n114
- Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons* 19n4, 21
- Mediation / Mediator 57, 62–63, 69, 87, 89, 95–99, 101n09, 102, 112, 117n98, 118–20, 122n124, 122–23, 147, 151, 171, 191, 213, 221, 222, 223
- Methodius 46n116
- Middle Platonism 54, 69, 73, 74, 94, 96, 121–23, 139n184, 147, 163, 192–93, 211n71, 220–21
- Albinus 14n
- Ammonius 47n124
- Atticus 47n124, 98
- Didaskilikos* 14n, 47n125, 58n14, n15, 63, 64–65 67n48, 96n16, 99, 193, 194, 194n23
- Influence on Apologists 14n24, 45, 47, 58n13, 60, 61n29, 62, 63–67, 67n48, 98–102, 192–200, 203
- Numenius 14n, 99n30
- Plutarch 47n124
- Taurus 47n124
- Modalism / Monarchianism 117n97, 145, 146n206
- Montanism 19
- Moses 25, 97–98, 105n62, 125, 126–28, 138n180, 141n189, 150, 151n10, 153, 160–61, 195
- Negative theology 63–67, 78, 82, 86
 see speculative theology; transcendence, divine
- Nicaea / Nicene controversy 4, 6–8, 8n13, 11, 54n1, 101n42, 107n67, 110n78, 142n190, 146, 146n208, 192, 200, 204, 209, 226, 227
- Nicephorus Callistus 46n117
- Novatian 108n71

- Origen 46, 107n67, 110n78, 136n173, 142n190, 227
- Pantaenus 46
- Patriarchs 23, 25, 25n33, 103, 125, 127–28, 151, 196, *see also* Adam; Moses
- Paul, Apostle 21n12, 28, 29, 37n80, 59, 74, 122, 163, 173, 210–11
- Pentecost 184
- Person 6, 11, 54n1, 146, 192, 209, 227
- Philip of Side 46, 47n123
- Philo 14n, 49, 88, 98n26, 101n43, 102n52
- Philosophy, general 54, 64n36, 101n42
- In Apologetic theology 44–45, 47–48, 49, 52–53, 95, 104, 116
- In Irenaeus 39, 53, 76–78, 87–88, 223
- See also* Middle Platonism; Plato
- Plato 39n85, 52, 57, 64, 66, 67, 68–69, 76n79, 76–78, 87n126, 94, 96, 98, 98n28, 150, 151n10, 156, 193–94, 195
- Polycarp 19–21
- Pothinus 19, 19n6, 21n12, n14
- Power, divine 66, 72, 88n131, 98n28, 98–102, 105, 107–8, 120–22, 148, 154, 162–63, 164n61, 197–200, 226
- Prophecy / Prophets 126–29, 151, 153–54, 156, 158, 159, 160, 183–87, 212n74, 224 *see also* Logos, in Justin, prophecy; revelation
- Providence, divine 58, 60, 61n28, 74, 77, 81, 98, 193
- Recapitulation 2n3, 24–25, 172n83
- Redemption 41, 43–44, 50, 50n138, 58, 59, 59n20, 61, 73, 81, 85, 185–87, 210, 216–20 *see also* adoption
- Regula fidei* 1, 5, 29, 42, 43, 44, 70, 73, 74, 78, 81, 88–89, 119, 123, 151, 165, 167n68, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 176, 205n55, 206, 223–24
- Resurrection 49n134, 51–52, 191, 218 *see also* incarnation; Jesus, human; redemption
- Revealer / revelation 50n138, 55, 59, 61, 73, 74, 80, 102–106, 123–130, 139n184, 142–45, 160–61, 183–87, 212n74 *see also* prophecy / prophets
- Rhetoric 40n88, 43, 49, 70–72, 74, 76, 82n105, 174, 205–10, 222
- Salvation *see* redemption
- Scripture 2–4, 19n7, 25, 36, 42–43, 48–49, 50, 57, 70–71, 127–28, 156n27, 184, 223–25
- Septuagint 25, 36, 56, 58n13, 126, 127–28, 161
- Sextus Empiricus 67n48
- Simplicity, divine 54, 86–89, 90, 132–35, 142, 147, 206, 224–25
- Simon Magus 31n52
- Sin 86n122, 167 *see also* death
- Socrates, historian 46
- Socrates, philosopher 45, 51
- Son
- In Athenagoras 93n4, 101, 157n31, 198–99
- In Justin 93n4, 96, 104, 106n66, 151–52, 191–93, 194
- In Irenaeus
- Compared to Logos as title 92n1
- Economic functions 123–25, 127, 129–30, 166, 212–20
- Relation to the Father 11, 25, 74, 78, 137, 140n189, 142n190, 143–44, 164, 206–12, 221
- Relation to the Spirit 165, 168, 206–12, 218, 221
- In scripture 58–59, 74, 125–26, 163, 210–12
- In Theophilus 49, 93n4
- See also* Logos
- Sophia
- In Athenagoras and Justin 28n44, 35n71, 96, 100n35, 159n35
- In Irenaeus
- As a quality of God 168n70, 178
- As Holy Spirit 28–29, 35n71, 168–76, 183, 185, 187
- Creative function 28, 169–70, 173, 176–83, 187, 212–16
- Development of thought 164–67, 206–8, 208–12
- Origin 175, 225–26
- Prophetic/Revelatory function 183–87, 212n74
- Relation to God/Father 91, 173–76, 183, 206–12
- Relation to Logos/Son 171–76, 183, 186, 206–12
- In scripture / Jewish / Jewish Christian background 28n44, 122n121, 155n27, 168, 178
- In Theophilus 28, 35n71, 112, 115, 158–164, 166–72, 174, 200–205 *see also* Holy Spirit, in Theophilus

Sophia (*cont.*)

In Valentinianism 32n59, 34–35, 35n71,
80–81, 86, 131–32

See also Holy Spirit; wisdom

Spatial Theology *see* topological theology

Speculative theology 4, 10, 78, 83, 83n108,
130, 148, 170, 175, 225

Spirit

As an impersonal divine attribute 181,
217n89

As a name/quality of the divine
essence 11, 55, 90, 90n142, 91, 135, 142,
146, 147, 198, 206, 208, 221, 223–25

As a generic Spirit 156, 163

In philosophy 156, 163

In scripture / Jewish Theology 57, 90

See also Holy Spirit; Sophia

Stoicism 14n, 44, 49n135, 52, 67n48, 85,
94–95, 104, 108n72, 112, 113n88, 114, 148,
156, 163

Subordinationism 99, 105–106, 106n66,
117n97, 189–90, 192–196, 199–200, 203, 205,
208, 213n78, 221, 223

Tatian 23, 38n83, 45, 11n81

Tertullian 36, 108n71

Theodoret 143n194

Theological language 54

In Apologetic theology 68–69, 91, 115–16,
136n172, 193, 222

In Irenaeus 83, 89n138, 89–90, 91

In Valentinianism 33, 70, 222

See also analogy; Irenaeus,
hermeneutical method

Theophany 25–26, 102–104, 125–130, 151

Theophilus of Antioch 8, 26–29, 48–50, 52,
56, 60, 64–66, 68–69, 76n79, 84, 88, 93n4,
97–98, 100n35, 101n45, 101–102, 102n51,
107n68, n69, 111n81, 112–16, 120, 135, 137,
139, 143, 150n3, 158–64, 166–72, 173, 174,
176, 177, 179, 180–83, 184, 187, 200–205, 213
see also apologists / apologetic theology;
creation / Creator, in Theophilus; Father,
in Theophilus; God, in Apologetic
theology; Holy Spirit, in Theophilus;
Logos, in Theophilus; Son, in Theophilus;
Sophia, in Theophilus

Transfiguration 127

Topological Theology

In Apologetic theology 67–69, 94–95,
112–16, 136, 142, 164, 222

In Irenaeus 89–90, 91 134–35, 142, 175,
223

In Valentinianism 11, 33, 36, 69–70,
79–81, 120, 121n119, 134–36, 142, 144, 206,
208, 222–23

See also theological language;

Valentinianism, *Pleroma*;

Valentinianism, theory of emanations/
emissions

Transcendence, divine 54

In Apologetic theology 51, 63–69, 91, 96,
100, 102, 129, 147, 194n23, 202, 222

In Irenaeus 55, 76, 78–86, 89–90, 91, 118,
122, 129, 144n200, 224

In Valentinianism 33–34, 79–81, 222

See also topological theology

Trinitarian Theology

Economic Trinity 189, 212–20

Immanent Trinity 189, 206–12, 225, 227

Immanent versus economic Trinity 3n7,
6n12, 12n19, 190n3, 226

Trias, Trinitas 204

Trinitarian formulas

In Athenagoras 197–200, 200, 203

In Irenaeus 190, 205–221

In Justin 191–97, 200, 203

In scripture 191

In Theophilus 200–205

Unbegotten / ungenerated 64n, 209

Uncontained 32, 67–69, 69n60, 71n66,
71–72, 78–79, 85, 89, 89n138, 90, 115, 123,
129, 130, 135, 143, 208, 224 *see also* Fullness,
in Irenaeus; topological theology

Uncreated 9–10, 63–64, 64n36, 65, 78, 87,
138, 209–12, 224 *see also* God; Irenaeus,
creator/creature divide

Unity, divine 25, 70, 74, 101n45, 146n207, 147,
196–97, 197–200, 205, 208–9, 216, 223, 225

Valentinianism 21n16, 29–39, 170n75, 178,
181n106, 213

Aeons 33, 35n73, 42, 71, 78, 79–8, 86,
96n16, 118–21, 131–32, 131n153, 133,
133n63, 135, 142, 164, 206, 222

- Christ 35n73, 42, 128, 133, 218
 Dualism 9, 36, 70, 127, 129n149, 131, 211, 216
 Hermeneutical method 1–2, 36, 41–42, 79
Pleroma 1, 5, 33–35, 71, 79–80, 86, 89, 118, 120, 131, 206, 222
 Protology 32–34, 78, 118, 131–32
 Relation to Marcionism 36–38, 70
 Theory of emanations/emissions 33, 79–80, 83, 118–19, 130–36, 158, 175, 222
 Valentinus 30–31, 43
See also creation, in Valentinianism;
 Logos, in Valentinianism; Sophia, in Valentinianism
 Victor (Bishop of Rome) 20
 Will, divine 9–10, 17, 61n28, 72, 84, 109, 110n78, 113, 117, 137, 140–42, 144n200, 148, 183, 186, 192, 195, 195n27, 196, 199, 202–3, 213, 220–21, 224
 Wisdom *see* Sophia
 Word *see* Logos
 Xenophanes 88n130

Index of Modern Authors

Aeby, P. Gervais 102n50, 108n71, 115n93,
125n135, 129n149, 142n190, 217n87, n89

Alès, A.D.' 149n1

Andia, Ysabel de 4n10, 92n1, 217n87, n89,
212n92

Andresen, Carl 44n107, 192, 194n23

Audet, T.A. 4n10, 40n86, 83n108

Bacq, Phillipe 27n40

Balthasar, Hans Urs von 4n10

Bardy, Gustave 48n128, n129, 158n34,
163n55

Barnard, Leslie W. 14n24, 36n78, 44n102,
n104, n107, 45n113, 46n117, 47n120, 48n127,
60n25, 95n110, 95, 108n71, 109, 151n12, 152,
155n26, 192, 198n33

Barnes, Michel René 10–12, 15n25, 56n7,
73n71, 79, 90, 98n28, 99n30, 101n42,
128n148, 131n155, 136n173, 142, 144n197,
146n206, 147n209, 155n26, 164n61, 175n89,
177n95, 201n43, 213n78

Barnes, Timothy 18, 21n11

Behr, John 4n10, 43n99, 129n149, 138n180,
140n189, 149n1, 215

Benoît, André 4n10, 24n27, 39n85, 40n88

Bentivegna, J. 49n134, 115n93

Bobichon, Philip 13n21, 100n35, 110n78

Bonwetsch, G.N. 4n10

Bousset, Wilhelm 4n10, 145

Briggman, Anthony 6n12, 15n25, 15n26, 26n35,
28n42, 40n87, 88n133, 99n32, 149n1, 152,
164n61, 166n65, 166–67, 170, 173n84, 176n92,
178–79, 184, 205n55, 213n78, 217n87, n89,
218n92

Bucur, Bogdan G. 99n32, 151n12

Bury, R.G. 58n13

Colson, F.H. 101n43

Crehan, Joseph Hugh 101n43, 111n83, 155n26,
199n38

Curry, C. 49n136, 113n86, n88, 115n93

Daniélou, Jean 4n10, 40n88, 49n133, 64n36,
69n60, 95n110, 98n28, n29, 108n71, 117n97,
158n34, 194n23

Desjardins, Michel 30

Dillon, John 14n, 47n124, 58n15, 63, 94,
190n2, 194n23

Dillon, John J. 2n2, 4n9

Donovan, Mary Ann 31

Doutreleau, Louis 2n2

Droge, Arthur J. 150n6

Edwards, Mark J. 14n, 94, 99n30, 105n62,
194n23

Enslin, M.S. 18n2, 19n6, 20n10, 21n14, 31,
40n86

Fabbri, Enrique 217n87, n89

Fall, Thomas B. 45n111, 100n36, 103n53

Fantino, Jacques 9–12, 31n52, 42n93, 65n40,
n44, 73n71, 79n92, 84, 85, 92n1, 118n103,
119n106, 123, 136n173, 140n186, 142n190,
164n61, 165n62, 172n83, 177–78, 183n114,
212n73, 213n78, 217n87, n89, 218n92

Ferguson, Thomas C.K. 40n88

Filoramo, Giovanni 29n47, 32

Giunchi, Monica 198n33

Good, D. 49n135

Goodenough, E.R. 14n, 60n25, 99n32, 111n81,
151n12, 195n27

Grabe, J.E. 24n27, 87n128

Grant, Robert M. 21n16, 24n29, n31, 29n47,
32n57, 40n86, 46n114, 47n122, n125, 48n127,
n130, 49n133, n134, n136, 56n5, 68n54,
69n58, 88n130, 108n71, 115n93, 158n34,
163n56, 198n33, 201n43, 204

Grillmeier, Aloys 94n9, 108n71

Halton, Thomas P. 45n111

Hamann, P. 191n5

Harnack, Adolf von 4n10, 24n27, 37, 108n71,
136n173, 139n184, 164n61, 204, 217n89

Harvey, W.W. 24n27

Hitchcock, F.R.M. 6n11, 27n39, 213n78

Holmes, Michael W. 69n60

Houssiau, Albert 4n10, 92n1, 129n149,
217n87, 218n87

Hurtado, Larry W. 88n131, 94, 96n17

- Jaschke, H.J. 149n1, 164n61, 175, 183, 217n89
- Kalvesmaki, Joel 30n49
- Kelly, J.N.D. 4n10, 108n71, n72, 151n12
- Kretschmar, Georg 4n10, 158n34, 166n66, 168n69
- Kugel, James L. 96n17, 98n26
- Kunze, Johannes 4n10
- Ladaria, Luis F. 59n20, 61n29, 73n71, 76
- Lanne, Emmanuel 205n55
- Lashier, Jackson 93n3
- Lawson, John 3n5, 4n10, 118, 215
- Lebreton, Jules 6n11, 61n29, 64n36, 85, 108n71, 111n81, 142n190, 144, 151n12, 158n34, 213n78
- Lightfoot, J.B. 69n60
- Logan, Alistair H.B. 29n47, 31n52
- Long, A.A. 94
- Loofs, Friedrich 2–3, 4n10, 8, 24n27, 24n31, 27, 108n71, 166n66, 213n78
- Mackenzie, Iain M. 6n12
- Malherbe, Abraham J. 47n125, 48n127, 69n58, 155n26, n27, 157n31
- Mambrino, J. 201n43, 213n78, 215
- Maran, Pridentius 68n54
- Marcovich, Miroslav 13n21, 68n54, 112n85
- Margerie, Bertrand de 28n43
- Martín, José Pablo 150n4, 152
- Massuet, R. 24n27
- McDonnell, Kilian 217n87, n89
- McVey, K.E. 49n135, 108n71
- Méhat, André 67
- Meijering, E.P. 40n86, 41n90
- Mercier, Charles 2n2
- Minns, Denis 4n10, 12n19, 79, 80n100, 82n105
- Morgan-Wynne, J.E. 151n9
- Munier, Charles 13n21, 44n102, 45n113, 55n3, 60n25, 106n66, 194n23
- Musurillo, Herbert 19n2
- Norris, Jr., Richard A. 82n105, 88n130, 104, 117n98, 211n70
- Ochagavía, Juan 4n10, 79n92, 141n1189
- Oeyen, Christian 99n32
- Orbe, Antonio 4n10, 108n71, 109n75, 111n81, 129n149, 131n154, n155, 139n184, 140–42, 146n208, 164n61, 177n93, 213n78, 217n87, n89
- Osborn, Eric 4n10, 12n19, 14n, 24n27, 60n25, 65, 71n63, 83–84, 85, 88n130, 92n1, 108n71, 111n81, 151n12, 195n27, 215
- Otto, J.C.T. 68n54, 108n71
- Parvis, Paul, 18n1, 31n55
- Pelikan, Jaroslav 117n99
- Pfättisch, J.M. 108n71
- Pouderon, Bernard 13n21, 47n120, n121, 48n127, 56, 64n35, 111n83, 155n26, 157n31
- Prestige, G.L. 4n10, 64n36, 108n71, 136n173, 144n197, 155n26
- Quasten, Johannes 4n10, 108n71, 204
- Quell, G. 58n13, 59n20
- Räisänen, Heikki 36n77
- Rambaut, J.W.H. 82n107
- Rankin, David Ivan 48n133, 49n136
- Reynders, Bruno 33n64, 120
- Roberts, A. 82n107
- Robinson, J. Armitage 23, 24n29, n31, 27n36, 138n180, 141n189, 171n78, 185n123
- Rodorf, Willy 191n5
- Rousseau, Adelin 2n2, 24n27, 32n60, 33n64, 34n66, 74n73, 77n84, 80, 87n128, 141, 143n193
- Runia, David T. 14n
- Sagnard, François M.-M. 32n63, 40n88
- Schoedel, William R. 34n67, 40n88, 48n127, 49n135, 57n9, 69n59, 88n130, 89n138, 101n43, 155n26, 194n23, 198n35, 199
- Schrenk, G. 58n13, 59n20
- Secord, Jared 21n12, n15
- Segal, Alan F. 88n131, 99n31
- Semisch, K.G. 108, 108n71, 151n12
- Skarsaune, Oskar 102n52
- Slusser, Michael 21n15, 22, 24n27, 45n111, 79n92
- Smith, Daniel A. 217n87, n89
- Smith, Joseph P. 79n92
- Spanneut, Michel 14n, 108n71, 115n93
- Stead, Christopher 118n100, 136n173
- Steenberg, M.C. 6n12, 12n19, 39n85, 83, 84–85, 177n94, n95, 181, 182n111, 213n78, 215, 216
- Swete, H.B. 151, 163n55, 164n61, 198n33

- Termini, Cristina 88
- Thomassen, Einar 29n47, 30n51, 32n59,
120n15
- Titus, P. Joseph 201n43
- Torchia, N. Joseph 65n40, n43, n44
- Tixeront, J. 4n10, 108n71
- Torisu, Yoshifumi 4n10
- Tremblay, Réal 129n149
- Unger, Dominic J. 2n2, 4n9, 39n85, 87n128,
134n166
- Vernet, F. 6n11
- Vigne, Daniel 217n87, 212n92
- Whitaker, G.H. 101n43
- Widdicombe, Peter 12n19, 60n25, 73n71,
76n80, 76–77
- Windén, J.C.M. Van 96n15, 97n24
- Wingren, Gustaf 3n5, 4n10, 27n40, 85, 92n1,
213n78
- Wolfson, H.A. 108n71, 136n173, 142n190
- Zahn, T. 108n71